Chronicles

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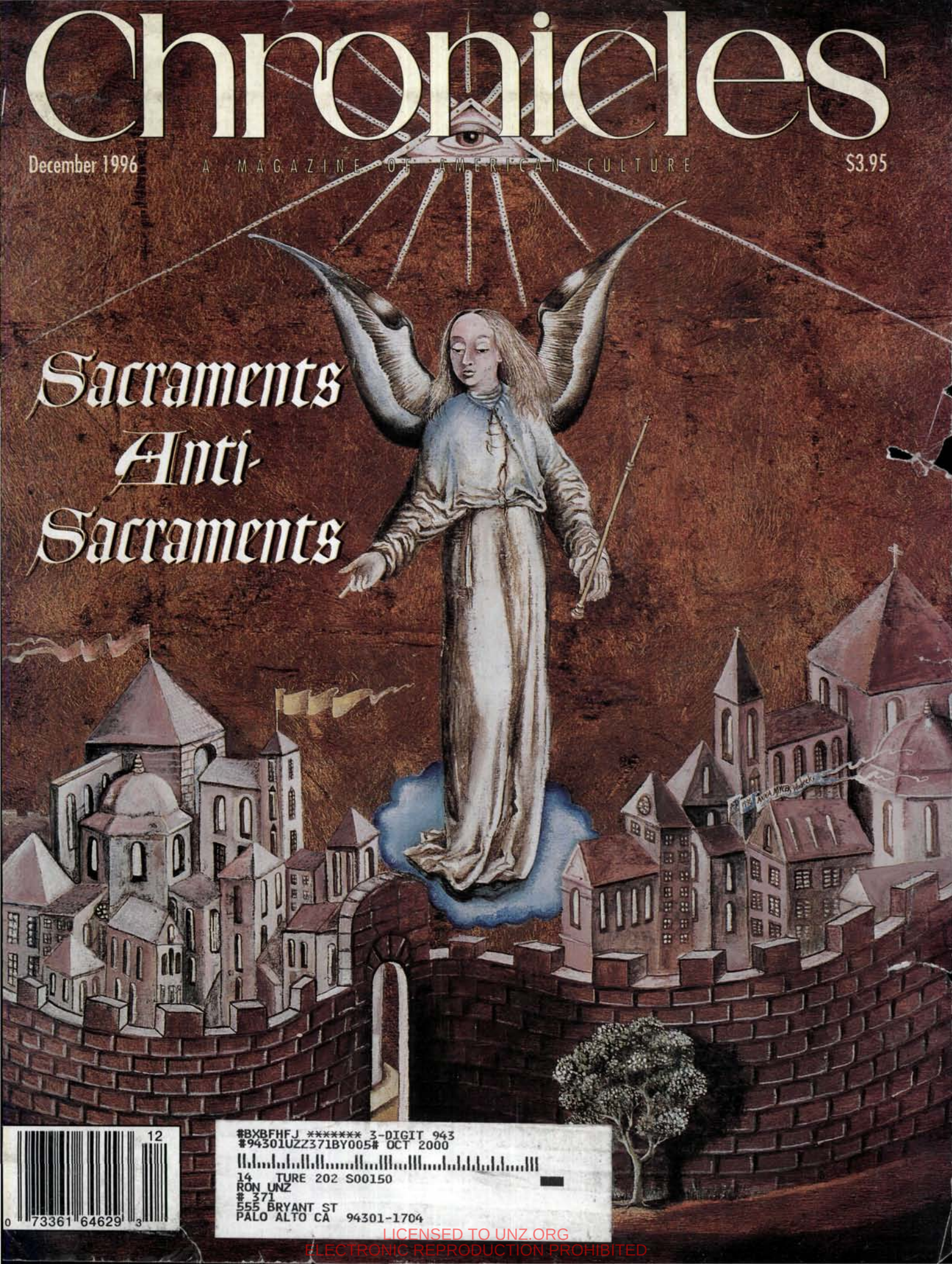

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DEATH HAPPENS

Our decadent culture does its utmost to distract us from a stubborn reality: After we die, we must face a righteous God on Judgment Day. Amazingly, many clergymen are accomplices to this cover-up.

Go to a mod Catholic funeral: Father Fluff plays God and *automatically* places "good ole Charlie" in Heaven with the angels and saints — especially if Charlie was "martyred" by AIDS — and never mind that everyone knows Charlie was a scoundrel and never darkened the door of Father's church.

Or go to a "relevant" Mass: You sing a few ditties with Hallmark-card lyrics, dutifully clap for Sister Silly's liturgical dance, listen to Father Flake's pop-psychology rap, and, if Father hasn't butchered the words of the liturgy too badly, you realize that Christ is our Savior. *But what are we saved from?*

Even though both the Bible and the *Catechism* warn of eternal damnation, you never hear about Hell in church. Apparently, nobody goes down the Bottomless Pit anymore, so it dawns on you that we're saved from something else — probably low self-esteem. *Aha*! So that's why Jesus bothered to get Himself crucified! (Oh, sorry, delete "Himself." Some prickly feminist might be offended.)

You soon realize that while church is supposed to make you feel good about yourself, you get more satisfaction when you curl up in bed with the paper and a few hot chocolates on Sunday morning. So you make your nest your church.

Then you read that Bishop Bubbles himself says he just can't figure out why church attendance has dropped dramatically.

Actually, it's not hard to fathom: Many intelligent people find trendy churches superficial and utterly irrelevant to their eternal destiny. Some become lapsed Catholics, and others, if they can't find a solid Catholic parish, jump ship for, say, an Evangelical church. It's a sociological fact that churches which are *not* "nonjudgmental" about sin, which focus on Heaven *and Hell*, are the ones that are growing.

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Chronicles

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EDITOR
Thomas Fleming

MANAGING EDITOR
Theodore Pappas

SENIOR EDITOR, BOOKS
Chilton Williamson, Jr.

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Michael Washburn

ART DIRECTOR
Anna Mycek-Wodecki

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Harold O.J. Brown, Katherine Dalton, Samuel Francis, George Garrett, Paul Gottfried, Christine Haynes, E. Christian Kopff, J.O. Tate, Clyde Wilson

CORRESPONDING EDITORS
Bill Kauffman, William Mills, Jacob Neusner, John Shelton Reed, Momcilo Selic

EDITORIAL SECRETARY
Leann Dobbs

PUBLISHER
Allan C. Carlson

PUBLICATION DIRECTOR
Guy C. Reffett

PRODUCTION SECRETARY
Anita Candy

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Rochelle Frank

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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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On Multiculturalism

While George Watson ("Don't Give Us India," September 1996) is essentially correct in his critique of multiculturalism, he misses the mark in his interpretation of a passage from *Paradise Lost*. Watson cites the lines in which "Columbus found the American so girt / With feathered cincture, naked else and wild . . . " as evidence that Milton held the Caribs as "gloriously innocent before Europeans came to corrupt them, much like Adam and Eve at the Fall." On the contrary, Milton implies that the near-naked Americans are as tainted with Adam's sin as the explorer who discovers them. It is not the quantity of clothes that counts but the fact that one is clothed at all. Adam's sin is seen to pervade all times and all cultures, staining all of humanity, and one should not be deceived by the appearance of innocence. Milton offers an anticipatory debunking of the Rousseauian "noble savage."

All of which leads me to my ultimate point, namely, that multiculturalism tends to ignore just these sorts of universal truths: we all are sinners; our ancestors have oppressed and been oppressed in turn; we all dwell in the threshold of the charnel house, and yet we all are called to redemption; we are summoned by love and beauty. I do not know why multiculturalists exaggerate the differences of color, creed, and language while they ignore or disparage the universal truths of the human condition. Perhaps they act out of a perverse hatred of anything that smacks of authority, in which case they are like Milton's Satan whose identity is his hatred of God. It is a miserable existence to be defined by what one hates rather than what one loves—which is, I suppose, indifferent consolation for those of us on the losing end of the culture wars.

—Hayden Head
Irving, TX

On the Ninth Amendment

If George Carey is correct in his review of Marshall DeRosa's *The Ninth Amendment and the Politics of Creative Jurisprudence* (September 1996), then Professor DeRosa is justified in his concern that the judges might misapply the Ninth Amendment, as they have other general phrases, such as "due process" and "equal protection." In recent years, the justices have indeed taken it upon themselves to become "statesmen," who see their mission as "problem solvers" for a "changing society." Of course, such was not the role of the judiciary envisioned by the Framers.

But the Ninth Amendment is not a threat, as Professor DeRosa fears. To the contrary, this long-dormant clause of the Bill of Rights may become the *antidote* to unlimited expansion of federal power, as was no doubt intended. As Madison told his colleagues in urging them to support the Bill of Rights: "I believe that the great mass of the people who opposed it [the Constitution] disliked it because it did not contain effectual provisions against encroachments on particular rights, and those safeguards which they have been long accustomed to." As the drafting of the Bill of Rights (Madison referred to them as "exceptions to the grant of power") progressed, it became clear that a list of rights would become awkwardly lengthy. But Madison acknowledged a problem that any listing of rights would pose: "It has been objected also against a Bill of Rights, that, by enumerating particular exceptions to the grant of power, it would disparage those rights which were not placed in the enumeration; and it might follow, by implication, that those rights which were not singled out, were intended to be assigned into the hands of the General Government, and were consequently insecure." The solution? The Ninth Amendment, which states: "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people."

I believe that this clause, rather than being a further conduit for expansion of federal power, is our primary way of checking it. Since it is the people themselves who retained these rights, however, it is the people who would logically define them. It is obvious that Hamilton was much too optimistic in *Federalist* 78, where he expects the Court to side with the will of the people in defending tradi-

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tional (Ninth Amendment) rights. Indeed, the Court has become the instrument by which minority interests rule the majority. The Congress would be a more logical institution to provide the mechanism. Since its members also take the oath to uphold the Constitution, Congress could enact legislation establishing the national initiative and referendum to define Ninth Amendment rights. The result of such a process would be binding, and not subject to appeal in the federal courts.

—Joseph M. Salmon
Dothan, AL

Dr. DeRosa Replies:

I can appreciate Mr. Salmon's Ninth Amendment romanticism; unfortunately juridical developments and congressional politics make it highly improbable that the Ninth Amendment will be utilized as a meaningful check on the national government's usurpation of the police power prerogatives of the states. To the contrary, the Ninth Amendment will—in the not too distant future—be contorted into an even more significant weapon in the national government's arsenal of political power aggrandizement, the Framers' intentions notwithstanding. It is this realistic view of things to come that I explicate in my book, which I hope Mr. Salmon will read.

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

PERSONAL BANKRUPTCIES are being filed at a rate 25 percent higher than in 1995, and if the current rate is maintained, the absolute numbers, estimated at 1.1 million, will surpass the record of 900,000 set in 1992. The situation surprised the *New York Times* (August 26, 1996) because normally high bankruptcy rates occur during recessions. We are in the fifth year of economic recovery, however, according to the experts. The problem, therefore, must be due to greed and personal irresponsibility. Banks are offering credit cards to people who would not have qualified in the past and, anyhow, the American people no longer feel that bankruptcy is a disgrace. Tom, a practical nurse from Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania, said of his Chapter 7 bankruptcy, "I don't look at it as a cop-out. I'm just taking advantage of one of the opportunities the Government offers." He relieved his guilty conscience by referring to the bankruptcy declared by Rockefeller Center. We Americans are so irresponsible. It is hard to see why the *Times* puts up with us. (It was a Japanese consortium that owned Rockefeller Center, but let that pass.)

Other explanations lie near to hand. For one thing, we no longer measure prosperity by the Gross National Product, but by the new Gross Domestic Product, which, *inter alia*, counts as American prosperity profits made in the United States by foreign firms, for example on television sets or VCRs.

A study issued by Visa International seems to show a striking difference from earlier periods. In 1991 nearly half the bankruptcies were attributed to "job problems." Now 15 percent are attributed to "unemployment" while 29 percent are filers who are "overextended." Irresponsible Americans again! Lawyer Alan A. Aaron of Midland, Texas, describes the vast majority of recent personal bankruptcies as "a husband and wife working where everything seems to be going the right way, except they have more money going out than coming in." Mr. Micawber, call your office! Other observers have a different view. "Downsizing is the current theme here," says Jonathan Kohn of Newark. Ms. Jeannie Seeliger of Jersey City told the *Times*, "We have people who have lost jobs in banking, on Wall Street, you name it, every field I can think of, and it has a ripple effect."

The role of downsizing in the current bankruptcy crisis is disguised by the flexibility of the United States economy. A recent government study, reported in the *Times* on August 23, discovered 8.4 million people pushed out of their jobs involuntarily from 1993-1995. Most of them found new jobs, but only a third were paid their old salary or better. You and your wife are both working, a situation historically true of economically precarious times. One of you is downsized and has to take a job at a considerable cut in pay. There is no comparable cut in your continuing expenses, which may include a mortgage, and the cost of college or private school. For many families the choice is between a life reduced to the level of the Victorian shabbygenteel, or borrowing. Consumer debt is growing at the rate of nine percent, with a current total of $1.2 trillion, $350 billion of which is on credit cards. Visa International estimates that one out of every 100 households will declare bankruptcy this year, with a debt averaging 5.3 times its annual income, as opposed to 3.5 in 1988.

Government figures show unemployment at 5.1 percent, a seven-year low. According to the papers, this good news caused Wall Street to rebound from a serious drop on the day before the news was announced (September 6). Louis Rukeyser of PBS had a different version. The news of low unemployment was leaked on Thursday, September 5, and Wall Street, in fear of Alan Greenspan's raising interest rates, sank some 50 points. When the full report was released the next day, careful readers could see that about a third of the new jobs were in government and so no sign of a healthy economy. (Much the same is true of the 10 million jobs the President keeps telling us he has created. His policies did have a role in creating many of them, but they are paid for with taxes, not *vice versa*.) As a nation and as individuals, we owe far more than we can repay.

Is there a way out of this mess? Yes, but first we must face the fact that downsizing, the loss of good jobs overseas, is the result of our headlong plunge into the whirlpool of the global economy. Our first mission is to protect American jobs by protecting American farms and businesses. Economic historians Alfred E. Eckes, Jr., in *Opening America's Market* (1995), and Paul Bairoch in *Economics and World History: Myths and Paradoxes* (1993), have shown that America's rise to world economic hegemony and the spread within America of general prosperity occurred at times

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of high tariffs. Republican Presidents from Abraham Lincoln to Ronald Reagan have supported protectionism, while Democrats from Woodrow Wilson to Bill Clinton have opposed it. On this issue, as on most important ones, there is no substantial difference between Clinton and Dole. Under either man the United States faces a future of increased downsizing and consequent debt. Even a slight economic downturn will send our country spinning off into the nightmare of bankruptcy and unemployment that Mexico has been going through for the past two years. After that the inevitable scapegoating will begin, to be followed in short order by ethnic conflicts, exacerbated by religious and economic differences, that will make today's Bosnia seem in retrospect a happy dream.

—E. Christian Kopff

OKINAWA'S Governor Masahide Ota has learned what it means to be governor of a Japanese prefecture: precious little. When Mr. Ota stood up for Okinawans who no longer wish to lease their land to the American military, he was asserting an ancient Okinawan belief in private property: "It's yours, do with it as you see fit."

The Japanese Supreme Court, 650 miles away in Tokyo, set him straight: private property is where the emperor quarters his troops. In this case, however, because Japan has not paid for its own defense for half a century, the imperial troops are not sword-swinging samurai, but the United States Marines. And a relationship that began with the bloodiest battle in the Corps' history has not improved with time. Okinawans want the marines out, and it is time to give them what they want.

What's wrong with stationing an entire marine division on Okinawa? Well, to the Japanese government, nothing. In fact, it's a great deal. A third of the Fleet Marine Force sits both within easy reach and at arm's length. Indeed, what better Pacific police than an outfit with an international—and well-deserved—reputation for getting places fast and furiously? Just as long as they pursue their noisy training—to say nothing of their off-color, off-duty pastimes—in someone else's backyard. And whose backyard could be better than that of the "racially inferior Okinawans"? (Really, more Eskimo than Japanese.)

Of course, to the Okinawans, it's a raw deal. Twenty percent of their already tiny island—including the best golf courses—is occupied by a foreign army. Our howitzers and tanks make a lot of noise. We use up a lot of water (always in short supply). We sell liquor and rice (believe it or not) on the black market. We even rape schoolgirls. (This is not to say that Okinawans are without their sexual sins: women marines have made good money turning tricks for island men, and a popular place with Okinawa's businessmen is a "theater" in Naha for voyeurs and participants alike.)

Nor is it such a great deal for the average marine. Marines call Okinawa "The Rock," and although the sentences are somewhat shorter and the surrounding water is warmer, the little Pacific island—for marines deployed to it—resembles another island with the same nickname. Okinawa is a great place to be idle, and the moment marines arrive they begin the countdown on their "shortimers' calendars" (some are real works of art) until the day they will board the "freedom bird" at Kadena Air Base.

The island is humid in summer, rainy in winter. Okinawa has one English television station, FEN—the Far East (or "forced entertainment") Network (which broadcast real-time images of a fish tank when the emperor died eight years ago)—and the PX may be "the largest in the Far East," but once you have dumped your paycheck into a new stereo, a new camera, and all the phony samurai swords you can buy, the charm wears thin. (Shopping opportunities are now central to our defense policy. When I was in the Persian Gulf some senior officer made sure, *in October*, that there were ample copies of the PX catalog to go around so that marines would not have "to worry about their Christmas shopping.")

Bad weather and lousy television, however, can be blessings to any marine, as long as he is able to train, but the training in Okinawa (with the exception of the Northern Training Area—a first-rate jungle) is the worst in the Corps, particularly for artillerymen and tankers: the impact areas are minuscule, the restrictions on night fire are severe, and the competition for what few training areas there are, is stiff. Without enough real training to go around, marines in Okinawa endure day-long "stand downs" to make them more sensitive to their "hosts."

What is more, to keep the Third Marine Division manned, marines deploy "unaccompanied" (without spouses) to Okinawa for as much as a year. The wear and tear on families (a divorce rate above the national average in a service whose officer corps is more Roman Catholic than anything else) alone is hard to justify at a time when there is not even a Cold War to fight.

The unhappiness—on all sides—might be tolerable, however, if there were a compelling security interest in keeping marines on Okinawa. Is the threat North Korea? Communist China? Certainly there is no shortage of smaller "contingencies" that the Third Marine Division is prepared to confront, but when was the last time the United States actually stuck by its commitments in the Far East? I think we know the answer: World War II. In Korea and Vietnam, marines got precious little support from the politicians who sent them there in the first place.

Why are marines on Okinawa? The same reason the United States Navy had a base in the Philippines, and the same reason the United States Army has soldiers in Germany: that's where they were at the end of World War II. The Philippines told the Navy it's time to move along, the Army is pulling out of Germany, and it's time to find a friendlier place for the Third Marine Division to call home. I suggest somewhere in the old 48.

—Christopher Check

POET, translator, lyricist, and author **Richard Wilbur** and historian **David Hackett Fischer** are the recipients of the 1996 Ingersoll Prizes. At a ceremony at the Newberry Library in Chicago on November 3, Wilbur received the T.S. Eliot Award for Creative Writing; Fischer, the Richard M. Weaver Award for Scholarly Letters. The awards, each of which carries a cash prize of $20,000, recognize writers of abiding importance whose works affirm the fundamental principles of Western civilization.

As poet Peter Viereck observed, partly in jest, "Wilbur has all qualities of a great artist except vulgarity." Born in New York City, reared on a farm in New Jersey, Mr. Wilbur graduated from Amherst College before serving as an infantryman in World War II. He later received an M.A. from Harvard. He has taught at Harvard, Wellesley College,

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and Wesleyan University.

His first volume of verse, *The Beautiful Changes*, which appeared in 1947, won the poet early respect from critics as demanding as T.S. Eliot. Since that time, his poetry has received many major awards: two Pulitzer Prizes, a National Book Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and the Prix de Rome. His translations of French drama into rhymed couplets, acclaimed throughout the English-speaking world, have been honored with PEN and Bollingen Prizes. Wilbur is also known for his collaboration (as lyricist) with Leonard Bernstein on the show *Candide* (recently revived).

In a long and useful career, Wilbur has created a distinguished body of work upholding the old conventions, both of form and of civility. He is the living embodiment of the civilized traditions of literature and the opposite of the trendy anti-Americanism dominant in our culture today.

One of America's foremost historians, Professor Fischer has devoted much of his career to exploring the origin and development of the American character. Born in Baltimore on December 2, 1935, he received an A.B. from Princeton (1958) and a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins (1962). He has taught at Brandeis University since 1962, where he is Warren Professor of History. He has also been visiting professor at Harvard, the University of Washington, and Cambridge University. He is the author of *The Revolution of American Conservatism*, *Historians' Fallacies*, *Growing Old in America*, *Chronic Inflation*, *Albion's Seed*, and *Paul Revere's Ride*. He is a contributing editor to the *Times Atlas of World History*.

In his highly praised *Albion's Seed*, Fischer traced the regional peculiarities of American identity to the parts of Britain from which the settlers came. What emerges is not a simplistic portrait but a vivid mosaic of diverse customs and traditions that define the parts as well as the whole. His works, although based on serious scholarly research, are as readable as historical novels.

His most recent work, *Paul Revere's Ride*, succeeds in debunking the debunkers while at the same time illuminating a crucial period in American history. So far from being a nonentity who got lucky (the standard view of leftist and revisionist historians), Paul Revere turns out to have been the communications center of the well-organized circle of Boston patriots who planned the first phase of the American Revolution. Fischer, working from neglected documents, shows how it was possible for sturdy farmers and independent-minded businessmen, working together, to stand up to the greatest empire in the world.

The Ingersoll Foundation is the philanthropic division of the Ingersoll Milling Machine Company of Rockford, Illinois. The Rockford Institute administers the prizes. Past recipients of the T.S. Eliot Award are Zbigniew Herbert (1995), Wendell Berry (1994), Fred Chappell (1993), Muriel Spark (1992), Mario Vargas Llosa (1991), Charles Causley (1990), George Garrett (1989), Walker Percy (1988), Octavio Paz (1987), V.S. Naipaul (1986), Eugène Ionesco (1985), Anthony Powell (1984), and Jorge Luis Borges (1983). François Furet (1995), Murray Rothbard (1994), Eugene Genovese (1993), Walter Burkert (1992), John Lukacs (1991), Forrest McDonald (1990), Edward O. Wilson (1989), Edward Shils (1988), Josef Pieper (1987), Andrew Lytle (1986), Robert Nisbet (1985), Russell Kirk (1984), and James Burnham (1983) are the previous recipients of the Richard M. Weaver Award.

OBITER DICTA: The painting on the cover of this issue is by Anna Mycek-Wodecki, who has woven together traditional Polish themes and images, including the "radiant eye" symbolizing God. (It is not a Masonic symbol.)

* * *

A footnote to Theodore Pappas's October article on the "glamorous" world of high fashion. The owner of Model Team International in Manchester, England, an ex-policeman named Peter Martin, has been convicted of six counts of rape and five counts of indecent assault and sentenced to 20 years in prison; he was originally charged with 19 rapes and 40 other sex offenses. As reported in the London *Weekly Telegraph* in October, Martin had been routinely assaulting his underage charges, including some as young as 13 years old, since 1981. His reassurances to concerned adults were reportedly so convincing that many of the girls who tried to leave his agency were returned by their parents.

* * *

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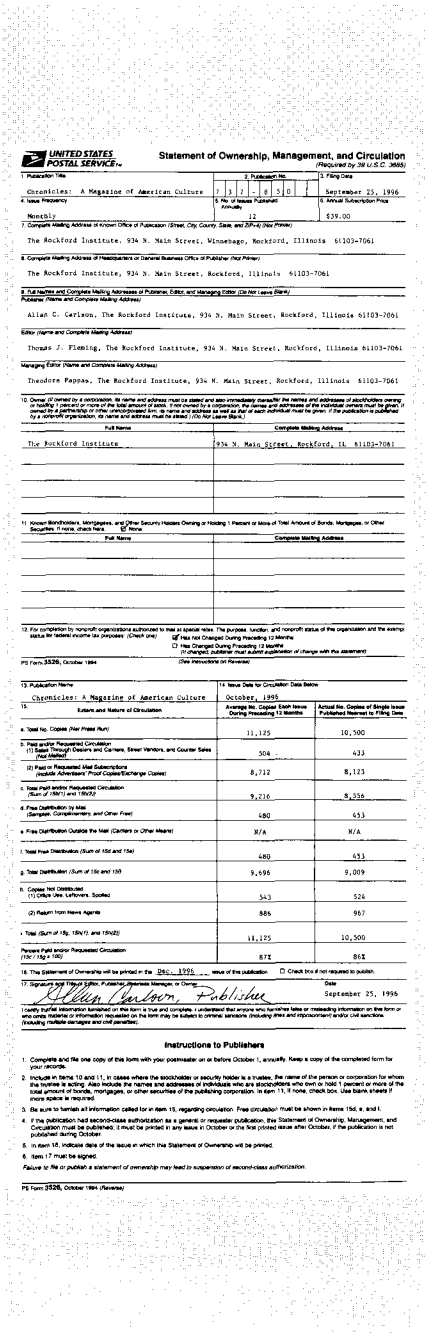

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Anna Mycek-Wodecki

The Sacraments of Anti-Christ

by Thomas Fleming

"A Republican marriage," said a French actress of the 18th century, "is the sacrament of adultery." This *bon mot* is recorded by Sir Walter Scott in the description of the French Revolution with which he begins his *Life of Napoleon*. In passing the first no-fault divorce law in Christendom, he concludes, the Jacobins

> had reduced the union of marriage, the most sacred engagement which human beings can form, and the permanence of which leads most strongly to the consolidation of society, to the state of a mere civil contract of a transitory character, which any two persons might engage in, and cast loose at pleasure, when their taste was changed, or their appetite gratified. If fiends had set out to discover the most efficient way of destroying whatever is venerable, graceful, or permanent in domestic life, and of obtaining at the same time an assurance that the mischief which it was their object to create should be perpetuated from one generation to another, they could not have invented a more effectual plan than the degradation of marriage into a state of mere occasional cohabitation, or licensed concubinage.

The desecration was accomplished in September 1792, when the solemn Christian sacrament of marriage was replaced with a civil service consisting of a few formalities concluding with, "You are married." In principle, at least, the Catholic marriage had been an indissoluble union, although it had taken the French Church nearly a millennium to civilize the Franks on this point. Under the new law, divorce was as easy as marriage, and for this new anti-sacrament, the *procureur* of Paris gave a little sermon to divorcing couples: "Young people whom a tender engagement had already united, the torches of Hymen are lit again for you on the altars of liberty; marriage is no longer a yoke, a heavy chain; it is no more than what it ought to be—the fulfilling of Nature's grand designs, the payment of a pleasant debt which every citizen owes the *Patrie*."

Children were also a debt to the *Patrie*, according to the French Republic's pro-natalist propaganda, and in the juvenile literature and republican catechisms of the day, children were to describe themselves as children of the *Patrie*. According to St. Just, children belong to their mothers until the age of five, after that to the Republic until they die; actual progress on the nationalization of childrearing reforms was modest. The crises of wars, foreign and civil, and the disruptions of revolution prevented the Jacobins from doing anything beyond establishing a rudimentary state system of public schools, although some of them, at least, must have sympathized with the suggestion, made by the *Société Populaire des Cultivateurs* of Ecully, that political suspects (in practice anyone who might have a reason for opposing the regime) be deprived of the right to rear their own children.

Marriage and the rearing of children are natural activities and subject to natural duties. Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Chinese—all civilized people—have acknowledged the responsibilities entailed by the biological ties. Christians have gone fur-

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thest in seeing a supernatural dimension. Marriage is of "holy estate" and the marriage ceremony, for some Christians at least, has a sacramental character. In rearing their children, Christian parents also bear responsibility for seeing to their religious instruction, whether they carry it out themselves or turn some part of this task over to churches that provide instructions for confirmation. For Lutherans and Catholics, a child's first communion is a solemn step on the road to manhood and womanhood, corresponding roughly to the Jewish boy's Bar Mitzvah. By degrading marriage and assuming at least theoretical control over education, the Jacobins were striking at the roots of the natural social order, but they were also making war upon the sacramental character of Christian social life.

Far from limiting their attack to Christian social institutions, Robespierre and his friends dismantled the French Church. Not content with nationalizing church property, the Jacobins went on to outlaw Catholicism, to establish an *opéra bouffe* state religion, the worship of the Supreme Being, and to make a concerted effort to exterminate French Catholics in the Vendée.

Here then is the genesis of the modern democratic state, whose fundamental principle is the unreasoning hatred of all things Christian coupled with the rage to destroy every natural institution—marriage, the family, all the little communities—and replace them with scientifically designed simulacra that may look, at first sight, like the real thing but lack the substance. The social institutions of modern democracy—the suburban family sending its kids to public school, the YMCA, and Little League—is like the food they use on the stage: it is colored to look just like the genuine article, but the wine has no taste, the whiskey no kick, and the food no nutrition.

The United States were not established by Jacobins, and the government set up in the Constitution was no modern democracy, but over the past 130 years or so, the American ruling class has steadily evacuated the old institutions and traditions—the sovereignty of states, the liberty of individuals, the sacredness of families—of all meaning and vitality until like hollow trees they are ready to crack and topple in the first high wind.

Most reactionaries have understood these developments and opposed them. What they have not always grasped is the religious dimension of the revolution, except in those obvious cases where the Jacobins have made war on religion itself: in the Soviet Union, where churches were turned into museums; in Mexico, where priests were hounded and murdered; in Nazi Germany, where ministers were either co-opted or persecuted; in France and Italy, where religious orders were suppressed; and in the United States, where children are forbidden to pray or proselytize in the schools built, staffed, and operated on revenues from Christian parents.

But, quite apart from these more obvious manifestations of anti-Christian sentiment, the broad social revolution being perpetrated by latter-day Jacobins in both political parties and by both so-called liberals and so-called conservatives, is a movement to liberate Western man not just from Christian traditions and institutions but from the Christ Himself. The modern state, and the liberal philosophy that justifies it, is nothing less than the anti-Christ that has been foretold. We make the mistake of trying to find the anti-Christ in an evil dictator or a false prophet, when the anti-Christ is all around us, holding power today in government, setting the agenda in our schools, preaching sermons from the pulpit, directing the lamebrained activities of conservative causes, inside our head thinking the thoughts we think are ours. We can never entirely free ourselves from allegiance to him, because we belong to a society that has become one great temple where he is praised and worshipped. When Catholic bishops speak the language of greed and envy, calling for social justice, welfare assistance, and wealth redistribution, he is writing their speeches; when conservatives call for empowerment, equality, and a recognition of diversity, they do his bidding; when schoolchildren praise the President for taking decisive action in killing Iraqi civilians to teach Saddam a lesson, he is sucking nourishment from the patriotic gore; when politicians defend their policies on the grounds of jobs-creation and individual opportunity, he is smiling over their shoulder; and, just as we are laughing up our sleeves at all these deluded fools, he—and the master he serves—is laughing with us, proud of our damned pride and conceit.

> If marriage is, indeed, a natural union sanctified in faith, then we should begin by repudiating the government's claim to regulate it.

There is grave danger in overestimating the strength of mankind's great enemy, but the greatest service we can do the powers of evil is to pretend they do not exist. The sunny optimism of the 18th century is a painted theater curtain draped over the infernal darkness that was enveloping the European soul. The current form of this self-induced delusion is the conviction that ours is a "Christian nation" whose only problems are caused by bad leadership. The heart of the people is good and true, we say, and as soon as businessmen and politicians realize that the country is being destroyed by the "unintended consequences" of their actions, a new Warren Harding or Ronald Reagan will ride up in a Japanese car and restore us to normalcy. This, friends and readers, is never going to happen, because if anyone does come riding up to save the day, it will not be one of the usual confidence men like Ross Perot or Ralph Reed; it will be one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, come to teach us the hard lessons, to give us the wisdom—as Aeschylus would tell us—that comes from suffering, the grace that comes by force.

I invoke a pagan (not for the first time) because we need the wisdom of pagans to survive in this anti-Christian world where Christian presumptions are perilous. By this I do not mean that we should no longer live and think as Christians, but that we cannot presume that the institutions of American life, that governments in particular are working on any recognizably Christian principles. If, on the contrary, our schools and legislatures are antagonistic to Christendom, then we cannot make com-

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mon cause with them except in the sense that we can join together with anyone, even people who hate and despise us, to accomplish some good thing—to teach mathematics or sweep the streets. What we cannot expect of government is to teach Christian theology or repress sodomy, any more than we can ask the IRS to collect tithes for the support of our churches.

In conceding the validity of this argument, most Christians believers—and some nonbelieving conservatives, as well—will experience a wrench. The comfortable old way of thinking about America, the carefully constructed images of mom and dad in the 50's with the kids in Scouts saying the Lord's Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance, the hope that we could some day restore the everyday decency of a country where "god" was not the everyday prefix for damn, and "mother" was not part of the routine obscenity that makes up half of the urban street dialect—from all this and more we must liberate ourselves. We cannot assume either that the police are our friends or that laws exist to protect the innocent, when the forces of both law and order are used primarily to strengthen the Jacobin regime whose existence depends upon the destruction of Christendom.

It also means that all the rituals and sacraments of Christian life from the baptism of babies to the unction and comfort given the dying are outside a system that is busily constructing a series of anti-sacraments every bit as ludicrous and pernicious as the Festival of Reason. To counter baptism, in which God's love for his human creatures is revealed, the state promotes the slaughter of the innocent; to undermine the efforts of Christian educators and confirmation teachers, the public schools inculcate a toleration of vice and perversity and a hatred of all the achievements of Christendom; the most solemn of sacraments—the communion of saints—is mocked every day in a thousand forms of artificial communities that hook our spirits into a Worldwide Web of disembodied intelligence; confession and penance are degraded into mere counseling, and the sick and dying are eased conveniently into the next world by greedy relatives and physicians who no longer have to swear to the Hippocratic Oath; and they have reduced marriage, "the most sacred engagement which human beings can form, and the permanence of which leads most strongly to the consolidation of society, to the state of a mere civil contract of a transitory character."

What is now called "family values" conservatism relies almost exclusively upon the use of state power to redefine marriage, to restrict divorce, and to clean out the nests of obscenity and pornography that have been established in the public media. On the surface, the bill going through Congress looks harmless enough: it would do nothing more than enable states to refuse to recognize same-sex liaisons, even if they were legalized in Hawaii. To some Republicans, this sounds like an affirmation of states' rights, but they are the same Republicans who think that "federalism" means redistributing some fraction of federal tax dollars back to the states, while reserving all real power to the national government.

If the state is given the power to define marriage, a temporary conservative majority in Congress may well refuse to include same-sex liaisons, but in doing so they will have established the power to regulate the most basic facts of life. A few years later, a leftist majority will guarantee the rights of homosexuals, and even if they do not, the Supreme Court—dominated by Republican appointees—will decree that any discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a violation of the 14th Amendment.

Back in the 1970's, when Senator Sam Ervin was campaigning against the Equal Rights Amendment, he used to insist that the chief beneficiaries would be homosexuals: if a man has the "right" to marry a woman, it would be discriminatory to deny that same right to a woman. It is today a truism to point out that while the ERA was defeated, its provisions have been enacted into state and federal laws and imposed by court decisions. Short of a social and cultural revolution that would wrest the institutions of our common life away from the Jacobins, there is no practical way to resist the course of progress. The more we fight, the more energy we invest into the struggle—energy that only adds to the growing power of the state.

In the fight to preserve the decency of marriage, there is something more fundamental than the American Constitution or political liberty basic at stake; marriage is an institution that antedates not only the United States but all states. For as long as men have been human, they have been marrying. Typically, the arrangement was contracted between families which had an interest in the welfare of their grandchildren. The purpose of marriage is not companionship or "good times together" or "caring and sharing." The primary purpose for marriage, the purpose for which it exists, is the procreation and rearing of children. Everything else is secondary. Of course there are childless couples, just as there are one-legged men, but who in his right mind would even consider anything like a permanent union with a stranger, unless it were for some purpose beyond his own immediate pleasure?

The Greeks, as we know all too well, were ambivalent on the subject of buggery. In some circumstances, at some ages, in some cities, it was more or less openly tolerated—although this toleration was by no means as universal as the "gay" lobby would have us believe. But even if it were, and even if we accept at face value the few stories of mock-weddings between male lovers, no Greek city—not even Sodom and Gomorrah—failed to distinguish between marriage, whose purpose was procreation, and any of the fantastic surrogates that degenerate human beings, straight and nonstraight, have devised.

Marriages at Rome were arrangements between families. For a marriage to be valid, the parties had to be eligible (one could not, for example, marry a slave or even an alien who did not possess the right of *connubium*), and they had to live together with the intention of being husband and wife. Their children would be legitimate heirs, presumptively entitled to a certain portion of the estate. The Republic became involved, where there was some problem, as in cases of divorce or a disputed inheritance. Men and women being what they are, divorce could be a messy business, but the basic rules were dictated by custom: the wife's dowry had to be restored, and custody of the children was automatically with the father. Under most circumstances of everyday life, however, the state had no representation in any matter between husband and wife.

Although the Christians took a more serious view of marriage than many of their pagan contemporaries (although nothing could be more serious than early Roman and Greek marriages), they did not, in the beginning, depart from the marriage customs of their pagan ancestors. Little by little, however, it became customary to invite a priest to bless the union. What regulation was to be done, in prohibiting incest or keeping records, was done by the church. In England, at least, from which we draw our legal traditions, the church, even after the

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Reformation, maintained a nominal authority over marriage.

A commonwealth's principal interest in marriage was in determining the legitimacy of children. This concern was particularly acute, wherever (as was common) there were rules restricting the rights of bastards to inherit property or exercise the rights of citizens. What possible claim could be made by a modern commonwealth, where kept women may sue for "palimony," where bastards demand the rights of legitimate offspring and get themselves elected President of the United States, where homosexuals claim special privileges as a victimized minority?

Any federal law on marriage is a step in the wrong direction. In fact, it is time to turn our backs on even the states claiming a right to license an institution that many Christians regard as a sacrament. Why not license communion, by either denying or guaranteeing the rights of homosexuals to participate?

In the long run, it would not matter which position the government took on communion or baptism, because either way it would be intruding into an area of life where it has no jurisdiction—which is exactly the case regarding marriage. This year, Dole and Clinton—neither one of whom knows what marriage is—will decide that states do not have to recognize gay marriages; next year, they will say the states must recognize them, and before the decade is finished, they will be telling the churches whom they may and may not marry, ordain, baptize, confirm, and bury. Who will stop them? Certainly not the conservatives who are rushing in where angels—and Christians—fear to tread.

I am tempted to conclude at this point, leaving it (as is my wont) to my readers to find their own way out of the Slough of Despond into which I have led them. Just this once, however, I am willing to sketch out a rough set of directions. In turning our backs on the state, we must then turn to ourselves and our own Christian institutions that are so sadly in need of reform. If marriage is, indeed, a natural union sanctified in faith, then we should begin by repudiating the government's claim to regulate it. Weddings should either be private or ecclesial, and we should refuse to recognize the legitimacy of any mock marriage jury-rigged by a justice of the peace. Priests and ministers should refuse to demand proof that an engaged couple has gone to city hall for the requisite dog license, and if, to protect ourselves and our children, we go through the official forms, we should treat it with the anger and contempt we reserve for any tyrannical invasion of our individual and religious liberty.

Christian marriage needs William Tells, who will refuse to worship the Emperor's hat, and when our children are put at risk by the Emperor's flunkies, we should remember why Tell kept the second arrow in his quiver. ⟨C⟩

Medieval Festival

At The Cloisters

by Marc-Yves Tumin

Respectfully far from churchporch polymaths,
Old Festival pursuits, and fair-haired daughters,
You wander near my bench where trees, by paths,
Grasp at a wall, which breaks above the water's
Devotionally irregular cliff-quarters
Of Fathers fleeced by some less-faithful wraiths;
Finally toweled off from Absolution's baths
With spiritual precision by Prayer's porters.
But crowds of sailing ships, and cruising launches,
Between the branched transshifting shadows flirt;
Dodging them, drawing nearer, perfume staunches
Leaf struggles, sprawling limbs, declivitous dirt;
A book left on the park bench's pine haunches;
My haste to glimpse the flutter of a skirt.

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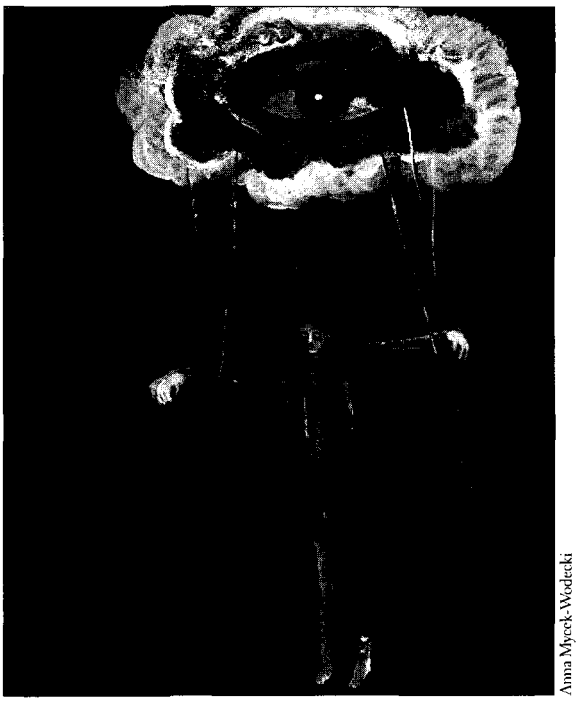
Sacramental Parodies

G.K. Chesterton and Muriel Spark Confront the Spiritualists

by Father Ian Boyd



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

"What do you expect of a spiritualist? His mind's attuned to the ghouls of the air all day long. How can he be expected to consider the moral obligations of the flesh? The man's a dualist. No sacramental sense." So speaks one of the characters in a Muriel Spark novel. G.K. Chesterton thinks along similar lines. He also regards the loss of a sacramental sense as the defining characteristic of the modern world. Like Muriel Spark, he regards the retreat to private worlds of the spirit as a religious problem, since those who isolate themselves in this way cut themselves off from the voice of God who speaks to man through material things. But Chesterton makes a further point. He also believes that a people who sever themselves from the materialities of everyday life often invent parodies of the material realities with which they have lost touch. In his view, in such a post-Christian spiritualist society, the old Christian truths never entirely disappear: they are merely transmuted into new and strangely abstract shapes. "All the tools of Professor Lucifer," he writes, "were the ancient tools gone mad, grown into unrecognizable shapes, forgetful of their origins, forgetful of their names." In *Orthodoxy* (1908), commenting on the loss of solidly material communities in which real virtues are embodied, he describes the modern world, not as something evil, but as something crazed and disconnected from reality, a realm in which disembodied Christian virtues have gone mad because they have become isolated from each other.

Father Ian Boyd is editor of the Chesterton Review *in Saskatoon, Canada.*

Contemporary life provides many examples of the sacramental parodies to which Chesterton refers. It would, for example, be easy to draw up a more or less random list of ceremonies of contemporary secular life that mimic, in a weird way, the beliefs of the Christian faith. This strange list is full of ironies. In a world in which the fear of damnation is no longer a matter of general concern, the therapist becomes the modern confessor, providing psychologically troubled souls with a secular substitute for sacramental forgiveness of sins that, in psychological theory, do not in fact exist. In an age which rejects religious authority, the ever-changing pronouncements of modern scientists are accepted with religious trust. In nations which have lost a sense of spiritual peril, dangers to physical health are regarded with the same horror with which religious people used to regard mortal sin, and increasingly extreme measures are taken to protect citizens from such moral threats as secondhand smoke or unhealthy food. Recently, for example, one of the most thoroughly de-Christianized societies in the Western world, came close to abandoning its age-old tradition of raising beef for food because of a mass hysteria whipped up by television and newspaper reports about a danger to physical health that was statistically so remote that even the scientific authorities whose contradictory studies were the basis for the panic became frightened by the irrationality which their reports had unleashed. In a popular and largely urban pornographic culture, moral environments as polluting as open sewers are regarded with complete indifference; yet, at the same time, city-dwellers express growing concern about possible damage to the forests

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and wilderness regions with which few of them will ever have any direct contact—"the swaying tall pines among the litter of cones on the forest floor," real places which remain for them what they are for Muriel Spark's self-destroying modern heroine in *The Driver's Seat* (1970)—a mental construct, a country of the mind. So, too, with the traditional belief in a "communion of saints," as affirmed in the age-old Christian creeds. This faith in the existence of a real but mysterious community of the living and the dead is replaced by a belief in a mock community of the Internet—an abstract and shifting fellowship of wraithlike beings who are incapable of making any permanent commitments, because, to borrow Muriel Spark's phrase, no meetings between them can ever materialize. There are even parodies of traditional religious festivals. In international athletic competitions, nations that no longer worship God organize secular celebrations which take on the trappings of religious worship, and the celebration of youth and of physical fitness becomes a sinister analogue to the Christian hope in a world to come where there will be no more aging or death and where those who can no longer die will remain perpetually young.

If nothing else, the reading of authors such as Muriel Spark and G.K. Chesterton helps one to understand such contradictions. No one familiar with their writing would imagine that the difference between religion and irreligion is a simple contrast between those who believe in the unseen world of the spirit and those who believe in the world of empirical realities, as though the great modern opposites were the religious spiritualist and the irreligious materialist. For these two authors, the opposite is closer to the truth: Christians are the true materialists, and nonbelievers are the spiritualists.

Chesterton's critique of spiritualism had its origin in a crisis which occurred in his own life. A personal problem provided him with an insight into the characteristic problem of his age. As a student at the Slade School of Art in the mid-1890's, the young Chesterton went through a time of complete moral and mental isolation. For a brief while, he entertained the possibility that nothing existed outside his own lonely mind. What such an experience of living in a solipsistic universe means in practice is described in books such as his *Autobiography* (1936), and *The Poet and the Lunatics* (1929), and, above all, in his strange 1908 novel *The Man Who Was Thursday*—a symbolic narrative in the Kafka mode: it is subtitled "A Nightmare," but it is irradiated with a joy unlike anything found in Kafka's own writing. When Kafka himself read the book, he commented memorably: "The author is so *happy*, that one might almost believe that he had found God." It could be said that Chesterton devoted the rest of his life to examining the religious and philosophical, and even the social and economic, implications of his escape from solipsism. His novels, his fantastically improbable short stories, his verse, and the unending stream of parables, of visionary utterances, and of moral maxims which form his vast journalistic output are all part of a single effort to stimulate the sleeping imaginations of his readers, so that they too would be capable of escaping from their own private worlds and make contact with the world of other people and of other things.

It is important to understand that for Chesterton the recovery of a material world was also a key religious experience. The fundamental Christian doctrine, after all, is the Incarnation. In Chesterton's view, this central religious belief alters the relationship between the world of spirit and the world of matter. After the coming of Christ, the spiritual and the material can no longer be separated. "A Christian," he explains in his 1933 book on St. Thomas Aquinas, "means a man who believes that deity or sanctity has attached to matter and entered the world of the senses." And again, he writes, "the trend of good is always towards Incarnation." Moreover, as he explains in one of his early *Illustrated London News* articles (September 22, 1906), material things provide the only sure way to get in touch with the world of the spirit: "Whenever men really believe they can get to the spiritual, they always employ the material. When the purpose is good, it is bread and wine; when the purpose is evil, it is eye of newt and toe of frog." For that reason, physicality acquires a moral and a religious significance, and the distinction between the sacred and the profane is no longer a distinction between the spiritual and the material.

In a chapter in his book on St. Thomas which he entitled "A Meditation on the Manichees," he comments on what he calls "the tremendous truth" that supports all Christian theology: "After the Incarnation had become the idea that is central in our civilisation, it was inevitable that there should be a return to materialism, in the sense of the serious value of matter and the making of the body. When once Christ had risen, it was inevitable that Aristotle should rise again." A respect for material things is, therefore, a sign of sound Christian faith. "You become more orthodox," Chesterton explains, "when you become more rational or natural." For Chesterton, the existence of the most ordinary and transitory material things is given a new and religious meaning by the life, death, and resurrection of the Incarnate Word. Comparing the teaching of St. Thomas to the writing of the modern Irish poet "A.E.," Chesterton asserts that the saint has the right to borrow the poet's words: "I begin by the grass to be bound again to the Lord." In his view, the mark of all genuine religion is that it is grounded in the material. When material things deceive us, they do so, he explains, "by being *more* real than they seem." He goes on to say: "As ends in themselves they always deceive us; but as things tending to a greater end, they are even more real than we think them. If they seem to have a relative unreality (so to speak) it is because they are potential and not actual; they are unfulfilled, like packets of seeds or boxes of fireworks. They have it in them to be more real than they are." In his *Autobiography*, one of the final books that he wrote, he asserts that his own philosophy might be expressed by reversing the title of an early Yeats play, *Where There is Nothing There is God*. "The truth presented itself to me," he writes, "rather in the form that where there is *anything* there is God."

This celebration of the religious value of materiality gives a special power to Chesterton's critique of modernity. For him the modern error is to have lost touch with the material world. Political life and vast economic systems and huge shapeless ideologies all share one essential fault: they are unreal; they substitute a world of shadows for a world of things. In small communities, people are in direct contact with primary things; in vast bureaucratic systems, people are condemned to a life of servile complexity, to what he calls a "spirit of illusion, of indirect rather than direct things."

In such a solipsistic world, it is impossible to hear the voice of God as He speaks to man through other people and through the direct experience of real things. The very wealth of the modern world cuts people off further from reality. It is understandable that in all his fiction and journalism, Chesterton defines evil as "the destruction of the material, simple things,"

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and Christian faith as "a religion of little things." Not surprisingly, he describes the complexities of modern life as a kind of madness, a "final divorce" from such realities as what he calls "liberty in small nations and poor families" and "the rights of man as including the rights of property; especially the property of the poor." In a sermon he gave to a congregation in St. Paul's Cathedral in 1905, he commented on the dangers of fragmentation in modern life, the way in which liberal individualism resulted in a condition of solipsism in which each person constructs a private shadow world out of his own isolated experiences and inner needs. Citing a passage from the Book of Proverbs (29:18)—"where there is no vision, the people perish"—he goes on to assert the need for a faith which will give unity to an otherwise meaningless existence: "The people who follow wicked, fallacious visions, wrong visions, end in great disaster and terrible punishments, but the people who do not follow any vision at all do not exist or cannot exist for long."

> In an age which rejects religious authority, the ever-changing pronouncements of modern scientists are accepted with religious trust.

The corollary of Chesterton's celebration of a philosophy which respects the religious value of material things is his distrust of philosophies and religious and political systems which exalt the inner life at the expense of the outer life. As he points out, the work of heaven is entirely material, and the work of hell is entirely spiritual. In his view, an attachment to a family, to a small community, and to a particular place is the basis of moral and political health. In *Manalive* (1912), his hero insists, "God bade me love one spot and serve it, and do all things however wild in praise of it, so that this one spot might be a witness against all the infinities and sophistries, that Paradise is somewhere and not anywhere, is something and not anything." For him, even extreme evil such as devil-worship is recognized by its lack of material definition: those who worship the evil one, he explains, "always insist upon the shapelessness, the wordlessness, the unutterable character of the abomination."

But the writer who develops the Chestertonian critique of spiritualism furthest is his coreligionist Muriel Spark. Only after her conversion to Chesterton's sacramental religious faith did Mrs. Spark begin to write the novels which earned her the reputation as one of the most urbane critics of modern life. At home in numerous small worlds, her novels record with witty and realistic precision the particular details of ordinary life in such small communities as that of Miss Jean Brodie's Edinburgh in the 1930's, of bored and restless expatriates in rural South Africa in the 1940's, of the sharply observed intellectual coteries of World War and post-World War London, as well as of the divided communities of modern Israel, or of contemporary Manhattan and of the filmstar world of modern Rome. Yet in spite of the wealth of realistic documentation, her characters' lives remain fantastically artificial and unreal. Only in the language with which they describe the unreal financial system to which they cling for security do they project an image of the natural world from which their lives are cut off: "They spoke of the mood of the stock-market, the health of the economy, as if they were living creatures with moods and blood. And thus they personalized and demonized the abstractions of their lives, believing them to be fundamentally real, indeed changeless" (*The Takeover*, 1976).

Like Chesterton, Muriel Spark writes increasingly improbable fantasies in order to draw attention to the growing unreality of modern life. In one way or another, all the unhappy people in her novels are in flight from the material universe: each of them lives in a totally private world. In a typical conversation in *Memento Mori* (1959), someone wonders whether or not other people are in fact real. In Muriel Spark's version of the modern world, the question is not an easy one to answer. In this instance, however, it happens that the characters in conversation are near a graveyard, and that one of them is a Christian believer and herself a novelist; pointing to the graveyard "as a kind of evidence" of the reality of other people, she asks: "Why bother to bury people, if they don't exist?" In *The Hothouse by the East River* (1973) the solipsistic nightmare has become the only reality. Paul and Elsa, the main characters, turn out to be people who are dead, but who refuse to accept the fact of their own deaths; and the people whom they meet in the nightmare city of Manhattan are fantasies whom they themselves have invented. "How long, cries Paul in his heart, will these people, this city, haunt me?" The satiric point concerns the unreality of an urban life so cut off from natural things that it is impossible to distinguish fantasy from reality, and the dead from the living: "You would think they were alive," someone says, "one can't tell the difference."

Both Chesterton and Muriel Spark suggest the same solution to the solipsistic nightmare of modernity. Since the problem originates in the separation of the sacred from the profane, both authors advocate that the material and the spiritual be brought together into a single whole. In *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965), a novel devoted exclusively to an exploration of the consequences of a fragmented existence, Barbara Vaughan, the central character, expresses a belief in such a unified existence: "Either the whole of life is unified under God," she says, "or everything falls apart." In *The Bachelors* (1960), one of the characters asks, "Afraid? What is there to be afraid of?" The answer to this disturbing question is that people must learn to fear the stubborn realities which will continue to exist even when their existence is denied—such realities, for example, as the "four last things" referred to in the uncompromisingly direct question and answer of the Penny Catechism which provides a title for *Memento Mori*. To the question, "What are the four last things to be ever remembered?" the Catechism answers simply: "The four last things to be ever remembered are Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven." In *The Bachelors*, the girl who may soon be murdered by her spiritualist boyfriend is reluctant to acknowledge the danger in which she lives: "Yes," said Alice's voice in the dark, "I'm afraid of the things I don't know. I don't want to know."

What both Chesterton and Spark recommend as a solution

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to the problem of solipsistic isolation is the recovery of what they call a sacramental sense. In principle, both authors acknowledge that the dualistic separation of the material and the spiritual has already been overcome by the coming of Christ. But their writings demonstrate the difficulty with which the lost unity can be recovered in human lives which are supposed to be, but which so seldom are, sacramental reenactments of the one Gospel story. Chesterton, who is a philosopher as well as an imaginative artist, has ideas about ways in which small communities of faith might be constructed, places that would provide a setting in which the perennial human drama is more likely to come to a happy ending. Muriel Spark is content to observe the contemporary disorder with a satirist's eye, and to assert through her fiction a conviction about the need to recover "a balanced regard for matter and spirit," without ever quite explaining ways in which this might be done. Chesterton once wrote that, in the end, the only thing important is the destiny of the human soul. In every one of the stories in which he describes characters struggling to escape from solipsism, he presents people who do what he himself once did, by turning from their private obsessions to the sacrament of marriage. Muriel Spark would approve of that practical solution to the problem of spiritualism. As one of her own unhappy bachelors explains, "I'm afraid we are heretics, or possessed by devils. . . . It shows a dualistic attitude, not to marry, if you aren't going to be a priest or a religious. You've got to affirm the oneness of reality in some form or another." Yet when it comes to the essential question of the salvation of the human soul, she would also understand the profoundly sacramental implications of another Chesterton saying—that forgiveness of sins is essential to the communion of saints and the resurrection of the body to life everlasting.

But in a world in which the sacramental sense remains atrophied, no one should be surprised at an odd and growing list of bizarre spiritualist substitutes for the sacraments which the nonsacramental modern world refuses to accept. If Chesterton and Muriel Spark are right, these sacraments alone can restore unity to divided people and to divided societies. In the meantime, there is need for poets and novelists whose improbable fictions will awaken the imaginations of their readers and enable them to recognize the fantastic character of the unreal world in which they are immersed.

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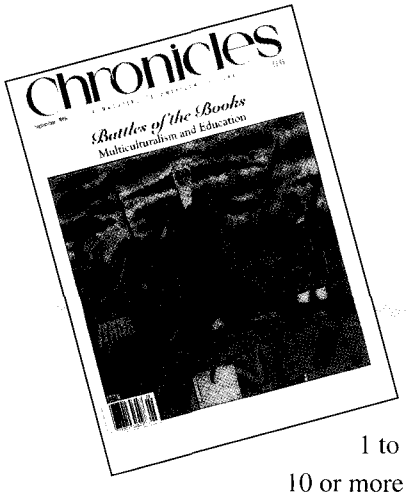
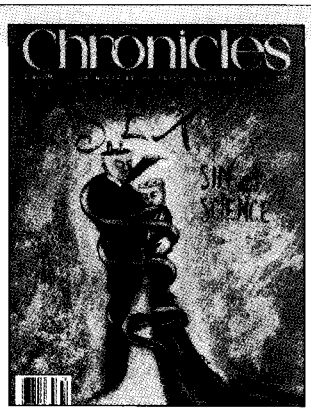
Great TOPICS, Great ISSUES

***Battles of the Books*—September 1996**—Thomas Fleming on the latest assault on the classics, Zbigniew Herbert on the significance of T.S. Eliot, George Garrett on the legacy of Shakespeare, George Watson on the multiculturalist case, and Harold O.J. Brown on the Bible past and present. Plus essays on abolishing compulsory school attendance laws and on the dirty facts about college admissions.





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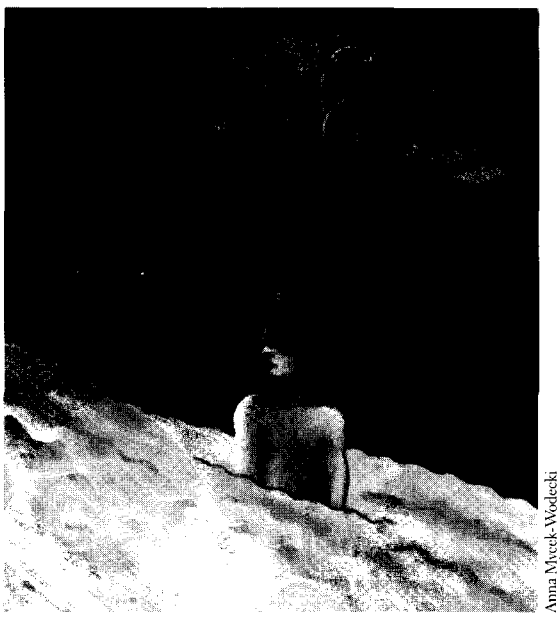
Sacraments of Death

by Harold O.J. Brown



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Among the sacraments of the Christian churches, the one most frequently received is the Lord's Supper, also known as the Eucharist or Holy Communion. In the classic English-language liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer*, the ministrant offering the consecrated bread will say, "The Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, broken for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life." Thus the sacrament at one and the same time evokes the memory of the death of Jesus and looks forward to the resurrection life of the believer who is joined to Christ by faith.

The tie between death and life is also present in baptism, which unlike the Lord's Supper, is a once-for-all event: going down into the water symbolizes the death of the "old man," dying to self and to sin, and the emergence from the water the rising to a renewed life, which begins here on earth and is fulfilled in the Resurrection. (It is true that the symbolism is rather weakened by the widespread practice of baptism by effusion, in which a small amount of water is poured or sprinkled, but even those churches that do not regularly immerse teach that baptism implies both death and renewal.) George H. Williams, Hollis Professor of Divinity emeritus at Harvard, used to point out how different Christian fellowships find different ways to meet the same spiritual needs. Adults who come to faith in Christ need a symbolic experience of initiation and acceptance into the company of believers, and adult baptism, usually by immersion, clearly provides such an experience. When such believers have children, however, there is naturally a desire to have their children incorporated into the "family of God," even though they are not mature enough for believer's baptism. For those in the great liturgical traditions—Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, among others—this is done by infant baptism, a practice rejected by the Baptist traditions that hold that baptism must follow, not precede, a personal confession of faith, and for this reason do not baptize immature children. Such "baptistic" parents nevertheless have a natural desire to bring their children into the Christian family, and therefore infant dedication—which one might call a kind of "waterless baptism"—is practiced.

For those who do baptize infants, a different spiritual and psychological problem arises. The person baptized as a baby has no experience of making a formally recognized and sealed personal decision or a mature commitment to Christ. To fill this need, confirmation is introduced. Many people "come forward" or "make a decision for Christ," either at a public meeting or in private. Some of these, although they may have already been baptized as children, follow up their experience of personal commitment with a second, adult baptism, even if, unlike the Baptist-inclined fellowships, they do not deny that infant baptism is actually baptism.

Other often unnoticed parallels between seemingly rather different practices of different branches of the Christian family reveal the fact that all those who accept Christ and intend to trust Him as their "only hope"—to use the words of the Heidelberg Catechism—have similar concerns and emotional needs that have to be addressed. In consequence, the various branches develop prayers, ceremonies, ordinances, and usages, some based clearly on the Bible, others less clearly so, in order to address those concerns and to meet those needs.

For one and a half millennia, the Christian churches have provided a universe of meaning for the people of Europe, and later of the Americas. Even those who were not thoughtfully and consciously committed to the faith found the great events and phases of life embraced and set into a framework of meaning and ultimate significance by the rites of the church and the seasons of the year. The rhythm of work and repose was cele-

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Harold O.J. Brown is the director of The Rockford Institute's Center on Religion and Society and teaches theology and ethics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. His latest book is The Sensate Culture *(Word).*

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brated, even to an extent enforced by Sunday closings—now all but abolished in the United States and beginning to be abandoned in Europe. Christmas, celebrating the birth of the Son of God, reminded all adults and children of the wonder of human birth and at the same time alluded to the fulfillment of our deepest hopes in the second coming: "Joy to the World, the Lord is come!" The short-lived celebration of Palm Sunday reminds one of the fickleness of celebrity, before the sad events of Holy Week, when the darkness of Good Friday and the cold silence of the tomb remind believers not only of the death of Jesus but also of their own: *"Du gingest, Jesus, uns voran, durch Leiden himmelan, Und führest jeden, der da glaubt, mit dir die gleiche Bahn."* ("You went on, Jesus, ahead of us, through suffering to heaven, and lead each one who believes the same road with you.")

Then the glorious Easter morn reminds all—not only those who seriously and earnestly believe the message—that death and the grave are not the real and final goal of human life. Even the absurd and sometimes atrocious degeneration of the ceremonies and symbolism of Easter into egg hunts and Easter bunnies echoes the message of Resurrection hope, although faintly and unintelligibly.

With the increasingly rapid, increasingly aggressive secularization of life in the United States, the familiar rhythms and seasons are disappearing. When "Christmas Vacation" becomes "Winter Holiday," the reference-point in divine promise and fulfillment is lost, and people are left with nothing more than the turning of pages or the hanging of a new calendar to mark the great movements of life. The three ceremonies in which virtually all Americans, Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish, participated, marking birth (baptism, dedication, circumcision), marriage, and death, sometimes augmented by a certain coming of age rite, such as Bar Mitzvah, confirmation, "joining the church," or being baptized as a teenager or adult, are no longer shared experiences common to the entire culture, but are losing their solemn sacred significance.

One-third of the babies born in the United States last year were born to unmarried mothers; marriage, the primary, solemn covenant undertaking of two humans before God, is being neglected by many, while others seek to transform the "honorable estate, established by God" into a state-sanctioned arrangement available to two members of the same sex as readily as to traditional heterosexual couples. Divorce has become so common that some of the trendier religious groups have introduced religious ceremonies for it.

Where marriage—the covenant between a man and a woman—is falling into oblivion, it is self-evident that there will be less infant baptism and dedication. Ceremonies seeking to claim God's covenant promises for a child make little sense to parents, or a single parent, for whom the marriage covenant is unimportant. What then are we to expect at the other end of life, when the thread of life weakens and the approach of death becomes insistent?

Traditionally, Christians have sought to accompany the dying with words and acts intended to remind them and reassure them that the God to whom they belonged and whom they served in life will not abandon them in death, but will bring them through that dark portal into the Father's house. Indeed, so gracious are the promises of God that even those who have not believed and served will be given the chance to turn at the end and to receive the words and signs that promise God's acceptance. After death, the Christian funeral is intended to comfort the living and to encourage them so to believe and live that in due course they may "meet on that opposite shore."

The desire to obscure the frightening aspect of death is clearly seen in the current fascination with death and dying.

Of course, Christian sacraments, anointings, prayers, and ultimately funerals—aside from the rare deathbed conversion—are at best meaningless, at worst mocking for those who have lived their lives apart from God and his people. Nevertheless, all or almost all people are overtaken by apprehension, anxiety, even dread at the approach of death. Death confronts the Christian with the prospect of entering the presence of the holy God, a "mysterium tremendum" that cannot be contemplated totally without apprehension. This is a situation in which "ghostly comfort"—the archaic term for the consolations of the faith—is indeed welcome. In our increasingly irreligious culture—the late Pitirim Sorokin characterized it as being in its late, degenerate, sensate phase—the consolations of religion are still available and offered to those who desire them. Unfortunately, in this late sensate culture, the number of those who know enough to ask for them is small, and the number who actually place confidence in them is even smaller.

Where the spiritual sacraments that accompanied and solemnized the mysteries of birth and marriage and even of coming of age fall into disuse and disdain, society develops secular counterfeits to meet normal human emotional and sentimental needs, or, if they cannot actually be met, to put something altogether different in their place. How much greater the need must be when people come up against the apparently absolute limit, death. Even for the believer, death and the prospect of judgment will naturally produce at least some stirrings of dread. When there is no one to say what if anything awaits one on the other side of the line, whether it is an awful Judge, a Savior, or the abyss of nonbeing, nothing is more natural than to seek to surround this mystery with institutions and symbols that at least obscure its frightening dimensions if they cannot transform them.

The desire to obscure the frightening aspect of death is clearly seen in the current fascination with death and dying, stimulated in this country by the work of the Swiss-born physician Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. It is expressed in words like this: "Dying is as natural a part of life as being born." The courageous words of an archbishop upon hearing that he has only a few months to live, "Death is a friend," are taken out of the context in which he spoke them and made to extol death. For Cardinal Bernardin, because of his faith in Christ, death is the doorway to eternal life. Taken out of context, "Death is a

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friend" is some sort of a sentimental beautification of what is in reality an ordeal.

It is worth remembering that in the Christian story, even Jesus himself prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Matthew 26:39). Even the Apostle Paul, who wrote, "To die is gain . . . and to be with Christ, which is far better [than continuing in life]" (Philippians 1:21, 23), called death "The last enemy that shall be destroyed" (I Corinthians 15:26).

Turning death into "as natural a part of life as birth," and calling it "a friend" without reference to salvation and eternal life, is only the mildest expression of the new thanatophilia, which is making death the goal and the greatest achievement of godless secular man. Does it seem strange to call death—which actually not one of us can evade—an achievement, a "constitutional right"? It may be strange, but it is the hidden reality of a society that regards it as "a triumph of the human spirit" (Lawrence Lader's expression) to bring about the death of one-third of each new generation before birth.

In an earlier day, death was accompanied by spiritual and sacramental ministries, but they served life, not death. The priest or minister came to the bedside—if need be, to the scaffold. He could not avert death, but he did not embrace it. His task was to help the dying person get through "Jordan's water, chilly and cold," not to drown him in it. In the middle of the 20th century, people began to note the way in which medicine was supplanting religion at the bedside. In those years, however, the physicians at first fought death, then, when it became inevitable, tried to make its final throes easier to endure. They had not yet learned, as more and more are doing today, to add to the healing arts a kind of ministry to death.

The medicalization of capital punishment should have given us a clue to what was coming. Earlier in the century, the traditional American method of hanging was found too brutal and, above all, unscientific—new, more complicated methods, the electric chair and the gas chamber, were introduced. The "assistance" of a physician was necessary only to confirm the obvious, the death of the victim. In the last quarter of the century, the revulsion against capital punishment as the taking of human life was reinforced by the apparent mechanical cruelty of the method, and an ominous solution was found: bring in the physicians, and medicalize death. Lethal injection has become the "treatment of choice" for condemned criminals in many states, and the outcry against capital punishment has diminished.

Lethal injection—the sacrament of Dr. Jack Kevorkian, the high priest of physician-assisted suicide—is becoming the treatment of choice for the dying; indeed, not only for the dying, but for the chronically ill, the severely handicapped, even the depressed and disconsolate. The fact that the same means of dispatch is applied, after seemingly endless appeals and delays, to the convicted murderer, and without much discussion or delay to the innocent but severely ill patient, surely tells us something significant about our society. There is no longer any real distinction between good and evil. One man "merits" his lethal injection by multiple murders, the other simply by being old, in pain, and a drain on society.

Corruptio optimi pessimum est, the Latin proverb has it: the corruption of the best is the worst. The sacraments of the Christian religion, properly understood, form a kind of symbolic bridge between the beginnings of mortal life here on earth, over the dark valley of the shadow of death, into the life that has no end. When the strength of the faith ebbs, as it has been doing for so many decades, the sacramental idea remains, but it is converted into a hollow counterfeit. Sacraments no longer symbolize the promise of God to preserve thy body and soul unto life, but simply mark the end of a road, "No Exit," as Jean-Paul Sartre wrote.

Bradford Pear Trees

by John Nixon, Jr.

Not Burbank but Seurat, I think, designed
These trees—one carefully placed dot of green
For each incredibly neat leaf—the whole,
Building to perfect cones. A nonsurprise
Would be a small impressionistic bird,
A wingèd dot, weaving a dotted nest
High in the symmetry. Or, better still,
A female stroller, elegant in dots
From spats to bustle then to parasol,
Might pause here in the shade, allow some tall
Young gentleman to tip his dotted hat.

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Confirmation and Indoctrination

by E. Christian Kopff

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Institutions survive because the old teach the young. The Quakers who founded Haverford and Swarthmore colleges in Pennsylvania had to admit that the Holy Spirit could use the help of explicit teaching to back up His direct conversation with the human heart. For ages the Church has asked the young to memorize its basic teachings before their first communion. The creeds and catechisms are memorized because it takes maturity to understand the meaning of these age-old formulas, often translated from Greek into Latin before finding a more or less comfortable home in English. Recitations of the Lord's Prayer or the Apostles' Creed are an empty chatter unless we are told what they mean. These phrases stay with us our whole lives. God commanded, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Martin Luther explained that He is not only forbidding lying, but enjoining us "to put the best construction on everything."

The word "religion" comes from the Latin *religare* ("to bind"). The new religion which binds together the globalist New World Order promised us by President Bush needs to instruct its children, too. Like Catholic and Lutheran schools, public schools provide a place where eager, slightly hyperactive children may learn the lessons of their community. The ideals of traditional American education were "liberal" in the old sense, appropriate for a free citizen. Its opposite was servile, banausic, practical, training for a craft. A free man learns to think and speak freely through the study of languages, his own, other peoples', and that complex and abstract language which is mathematics. This is the education sketched in Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. It can be found elsewhere in modern times, from Luther and Elyot's *Governour* to Mill's "Inaugural Address" at St. Andrews. It is today, of course, hopelessly obsolete. Free citizens needed to know foreign languages and mathematics. The subjects of the New World Order do not.

When the National Center for Educational Statistics reviewed recent scores on the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress), they lamented, "These figures show that many students appear to be graduating from high school with little of the mathematics understanding required by the fastest growing occupations or for college work." David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle responded in their book *The Manufactured Crisis* (1995):

> In an unusual display of agreement, dozens of economists have predicted that growth is likely in the service section of employment—and this means more jobs for janitors, limousine drivers, word processors, sales clerks, and the like. We've also seen estimates that the hospitality industry—e.g., tourism—is now employing more people than any other and that the Wal-Mart chain will soon be the largest single employer in America. But most jobs in hospitality and retail sales do not require high-level mathematical skills. So if schools do not prepare everyone to perform high-level mathematics, perhaps it is because students and their teachers are responding sensibly to the looming job market.

This is a self-fulfilling prophecy. In 1990, Motorola announced it was investing in a computer chip plant in Sendai, Japan, because it could not find enough American workers with the necessary mathematical skills. American students have the education to serve as Wal-Mart checkout clerks, and their downsized customers cannot afford to shop anywhere else as manufactur-

E. Christian Kopff is a professor of Greek and Latin at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

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ing jobs continue to flee the country. In the 1950's, 33 percent of jobs in the United States were in manufacturing. In 1996, the figure is 16 percent. Much of this job loss is due to our reckless leap into the global marketplace, but some of it, as the Motorola example shows, is due to the implosion of our education system in the 1960's.

So much for what the New World Order does not teach. What does it teach? A good sample of what goes on in classrooms can be gleaned from *dear author*, a book of letters written by junior high and high school students to the authors of books they have read. Mark Mattox of Portage, Michigan, hurt his foot jumping on a trampoline and was stuck at home for two weeks. In boredom he began reading Johann David Wyss's *Swiss Family Robinson*. Mark loved the book and wrote Wyss (via Our Weekly Reader's *Read* magazine and the Library of Congress' Center for the Book). "Mr. Wyss, you have certainly succeeded in making an incredibly sad environmentalist out of me. Your work is definitely one of the strong outcries against pollution and overpopulation I have ever seen, heard, or read in my entire life; what is contained within your book is an entire world that our self-centered race has taken up in its massive hand and squeezed to a cruel and unneeded death." Mark's letter is a tribute to the success of our educational system. Adventure, danger, loyalty, a fast-paced tale. What do these all add up to for a well-trained catechumen in our schools? Why, a strong outcry against pollution and overpopulation, naturally! All we need, to show intellectual diversity, would be a letter from a young "conservative" praising the book as an argument for the importance of family values.

Linetta Alley of Bridgewater, Virginia, thanked Bette Greene, author of *The Summer of My German Soldier*. "This book gave me such a different perspective on how prejudiced our country is." Discovering American prejudice is an important part of our educational system. Astum Khan of Rolling Meadows, Illinois, in a letter to Alex Haley about *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, described his situation. "I was Indian and Muslim, and everyone knows how Americans feel about those who are different. You are an outsider. A stranger. Nobody wants you. You can make as many white friends as you want, but when it comes right down to it, they're American; you're not." (You may have been wondering how grateful immigrants are for our immigration policies.) Ginger Brandeen wrote to Lois Lowry, "I live in a small town in Oregon, where I see bigotry, prejudice, and discrimination every day."

The books these children read are often mentioned as school assignments. Out of 75 letters in *dear author*, two are written to Alex Haley, two to Anne Frank, and three to John Steinbeck. Five letters are on books concerning the holocaust, including Jane Yolen's *Briar Rose* and Jerzy Kosinski's *Painted Bird*. Emily Judge of Wheaton, Illinois, wrote to Elie Wiesel: "I was assigned to read *Night* and literally groaned when I discovered it was about the Holocaust. I felt that I had heard enough about this horrible time period and didn't understand why teachers persisted in making me read such graphic accounts. . . . As I finished the book, I threw it across my room, angered and disgusted." Some parents have similar reactions. I once talked to a parent who could not understand why his daughter was assigned Anne Frank's *Diary* two consecutive years in public school. Eventually Emily repents and there is a happy ending. "Thank you for the courage you had to write *Night*. Never again will I shut myself off from reality."

Religion is not totally lacking from the modern public school. For example, *dear author*'s index includes entries for "Judaism" and "Muslim." The entry, "ancestors," refers to a letter by Betty Chu of San Francisco, thanking Laurence Yep for his *Child of the Owl*. "Now I understand why my mother prayed to my ancestors with me," she writes, in one of two references to her family's ancestor worship. The absence of "Christian" from the Index is a slip, but perhaps not an accident. Lacey Murphy writes to thank Janette Oke for *The Calling of Emily Evans*, which helped Lacey in her decision to become a missionary. She mentions church and Vacation Bible School explicitly. Breeann Songer of Ellicottville, New York, is more discreet in her letter to Madeleine L'Engle. "From your books I can tell that you believe in God and His ways the same way I do. I thought it was wonderful when you said He makes sure each star has a name so they won't feel unwanted." Exceptionally, these last two authors seem not to have been read as school assignments.

For these students, politics are, in Thomas Short's phrase, "Oppression History." No one thanks Jefferson or Madison or Tocqueville for making sense out of our system, or Winston Churchill for telling the story of the English-speaking peoples. Jason A. Booms of Ubly, Michigan, wrote to Leon Uris: "I can relate to the peasants in the *Trinity* book in many ways. Like them, I am growing up in a farming village, I am Catholic, and I too feel the pressures of a foreign rule. The major difference is that my foreign rule is my parents and the teachers who grew up in a different world." The lesson Bill Campbell of Flint, Michigan, learned from Niccolo Machiavelli was that politicians have not changed since the 16th century and Bill no longer wants to be one. At least he learned an intellectual lesson, although his response to it was typically emotional.

In contemporary education, sympathy or revulsion is the required response, not critical assent or dissent. No one writes to thank C.S. Lewis for trying to puzzle out a rational basis for religious faith. Brad Lockard of Jackson, Kentucky, did write to Jim Garrison to thank him for teaching him to question authority. "By the time I finished the book, I had formed my own opinion: the government helped to kill Kennedy. . . . Your book inspired me to challenge even *your* view on the government and the assassination." Brad thinks that swallowing Garrison's hypothesis lock, stock, and barrel is his own opinion and is even questioning Garrison. This is the best example of a critical mind among the 75 letters. It will come as little surprise that there are no letters to George Orwell.

The confirmation classes of our public schools do not require high-level mathematical skills or reading knowledge of a foreign language. Critical thought itself is unnecessary for the travel agents and Wal-Mart clerks of the future. Perhaps someday they may be asked to memorize what seems to be the natural creed or international anthem for our day, penned and sung by someone who may turn out to be one of the great poets of the coming World Monoculture, Aspen's own John Denver. "I'm sorry for the way things are in China. I'm sorry for the way things used to be. More than anything else I'm sorry for myself." For the Christian, God is Love. For the product of our secular indoctrination, the individual is a god, and, like an emotional version of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, these gods spend eternity contemplating themselves in self-pity. Fortunately, in its infinite providence, the international community, the ground of all being, knows how to take care of these self-obsessed, self-pitying gods.

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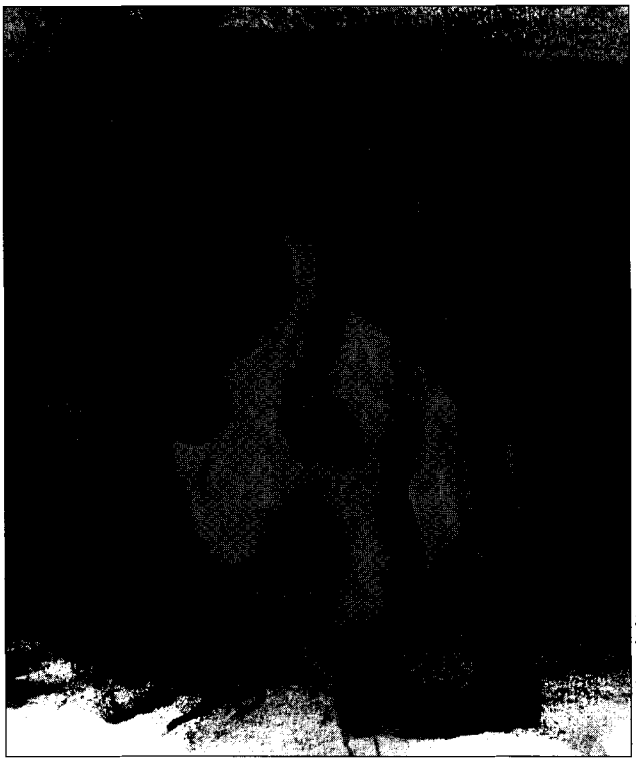
The Rise of the Profane

by Thomas Molnar



Anna Myeck-Widecki

At some point in their development, civilizations cease believing in the sacred and plunge into a new set of absolutes. No community likes to speak of decadence and its usually harsh symptoms; no one may even grasp the meaning of such an upheaval. Yet new absolutes appear on the horizon which seem to be barbarous because they are denials of the earlier sacred. For the sacred, in the eyes of the people, appears to be an absolute; it affects their imagination and judgments—until a "thomaskuhnian" revolution (philosophical, scientific, moral, aesthetic) diverts their attention to something else.

So-called transitional periods experience a parallel mobilization of two currents: the old, stable center survives in name, with its symbols and rituals, while a new focus, as yet amorphous and without validity, emerges with its own discourse, its own art forms, and its own set of acts to be performed. For a while—it may be many decades—the two run on parallel tracks; we call the first "sacred," the second "profane," and justifiably belittle the latter, measuring it in the habitual terms of the former. At such times, we witness the transvaluation of the tradition toward the as-yet unknown, and remain perplexed while the new, the profane, occupies the center of loyalty. A new foundation is sacralized.

It is obvious that we now approach the end of the "Age of Faith," and that our "profane" is the surrounding milieu of industrial, infinitely multipliable, objects and technological procedures that point to a kind of infinity in space and time. The new profane, on the way to sacralization, appears as a world of surprises, even of miracles; it insinuates itself in our nervous system as a series of spectacular presentations for our industrially underlined comfort, from the Internet to biogenetics. New generations pay lip service to the old "values" (nobody knows what they are and what they mean), but accept technology and its mechanical procedures as a trusted new reality. Without necessarily knowing what they perform and achieve, the new generations organize their conceptual and practical life according to the rules of a changed liturgy. The profane has become the new sacred.

The consequence is the rise of "profane" ceremonies, manners, behavior. For example, marriage ceremonies of a secular nature in secular surroundings, performed by state officials, replaced the church's blessing at the French Revolution, and received a new consecration from the Bolsheviks and in Western secularized states. Abortion and euthanasia mechanize—literally industrialize—the acts of birth and death, and we may expect that at some time both will elaborate their own secular rituals, as now accompany some divorce proceedings. Same-sex marriage will also do away with the ecclesiastical remnants in ceremonies and seek legitimation through profane rites. The presence of female personnel, from seaman to admiral, from private to general on navy ships, in army units, will also modify the initiation ceremonies of manhood and womanhood, since the centrality of the male principle in public affairs and in sacred matters had hitherto been taken for granted. In sum, we witness deeper changes in functions and rituals than mankind ever did before, but for the moment we are merely shocked by them, without measuring their civilizational impact. We are carried away by them, and ascribe them to a variety of causes:

Thomas Molnar's Philosophical Grounds *was recently released by Transaction Publishers as* Archetypes of Thought.

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conspiracies, the work of Satanic mills, loose morality. We hardly take them—as yet—seriously or investigate their roots. We are in a state of astonishment, as the last Greco-Roman pagans must have been when their temples were closed in favor of Christian churches, and the administration of provinces slipped out of the hands of imperial officials into the hands of a new authority—the bishops. ("Diocese" used to be a Roman administrative unit.)

And so it goes with most other transformations of "modern" acts of life, from the rules of childrearing by single parents to women in high political office and in business. Do I have to add the changes in language, grammar, and the redaction of administrative, literary, and religious texts? The new cultural worlds (manners, speech, taboos, ceremonies, gatherings with their novel liturgy) indicate a revolution of considerable magnitude. Changes in themselves are not new phenomena, except that they were brought about in the past by laws, reforms, shifts in social classes, conquests, national catastrophes. Ours is the first age when the laws of nature are themselves legislated, abolished, reinvented in a different way, first "desacralized" and then redirected, modified in their fundamentals.

Let us consider what happened in the 11th century. At the time, power belonged to the Church, including the power to enact reform on the level of society's structure and the ceremonies which went with it. The basic question was land property. The feudal lords' sons were conceived by official wives and concubines. The law of inheritance was not fixed, land ownership was up for grabs, either by the rightful or by the false heirs (bastards). Then papal decrees began to hold the powerful provincial rulers to the unilinear inheritance, to the exclusion of the illegitimate. In order to forestall troubles on the part of the latter, Rome created the institution of *miles Christi*, the order of the consecrated knights, members of which accepted the new discipline, sought adventure (and fortune) elsewhere, and left the feudal structure to its own evolution. Needless to say, the *milites Christi* worked out the ceremonials of knighthood with quasi-ecclesiastical resonances—echoes of which came down to us in the adventures of Don Quixote.

All vast social movements elaborated their own ceremonial system. The question is, will the same schema continue? The 19th and 20th centuries saw the liquidation of the nobility and the emplacement of the bourgeois order. There followed the classless society with its mass-values, mass-taste, production-mindedness—whether of the Marxist or the democratic kind. The novelty seems to be that in our day we do not witness mere rearrangements of social reality (from peasants to workers to managers, etc.), but a *biologically* aimed legislation, interference with what once had been regarded as the sacred features of life itself: equalization of the sexes, the use of sperm banks, intervention on the cellular and genetic level, attacks on the psychological integrity of the family, laboratory experimentation with human/animal combinations, and so on. In other words, ideology with its uncertainties has turned into technological precision-work.

As we saw, at each stage of social transformation new formalities (ceremonies, language, conduct, sacralization versus the profane) were introduced, most often through conflict with the previous formalities. It is problematic whether today's transformations, conducted without a sociological base and justification, but invented by curiosity and imposed by abstract technocrats, will have to fight for their modalities against the older shapes of tradition. In other words, is tradition able to preserve its cultural superstructure—the sacred—against a new "profane"?

We are witnesses to the conflict, the duplication of the tradition-sacralized forms (manners, code of conduct, rules of all sorts, prayer to a transcendent/personal God) by the technological formulae. The question is whether the latter are a mere novelty as so often in the past, to be later absorbed in the historical series of sacralized forms, or a break with this series, a time machine speeding toward the brave new world. Taken as the law of existence, thus hardly ever consciously mentioned, our life has been immemorially articulated into chapters—birth and its ceremonies, initiation into adulthood with its own diversified ritual, membership in the military with imposition of a code of behavior, work, marriage, old age—all raised to meaningfulness by an appropriate cultural "superstructure." Even philosophical thinking (Hegel's owl taking wings after dark, that is, after the events), is a reflective commentary on events and occurrences. But gnawing at our inside, we still ask: Will this rhythm not change with speed and immediacy, instant and mostly artificial reactions to events, the iconography of the television and computer screen? Simultaneous watching of what goes on in the world suppresses the distance and the interval, and leaves no room, no time for the old order of things that were dictated by wisdom, or, if you wish, by the nervous system and blood circulation. It is possible that the Kevorkians in our midst are working on a profane prayer to be offered to the medically induced Thanatos. But even if such a prayer is adopted (and Congress makes it a law), even if abortion mills organize ceremonies for hecatombs of fetuses, we witness a qualitative leap away from the laws of existence, toward the machine-directed automata.

As long as human beings and institutions were initiators of historical and social change, it was legitimate to expect transformations, for good or evil, in laws, manners, values, collective aspirations. Each was escorted to the stage of history by an ensemble of ritual legitimation that raised the mere acts of change to the level of spiritual, moral significance. The new factor in our modern times seems to be the mechanical character of change, its independence of human initiative, of human interest, of human comprehension. It is thus justifiable to ask: Does the new kind of change need a higher legitimation, the type which used to manifest itself in ceremonial accompaniments? Does a machine-made need (institution, cultural creation, civilizational value, a laboratory-produced organ or robot) call forth in our depth a consecrating ritual? Will our civilization require liturgy and ceremony? It is just possible—hence our "age of anxiety"—that this civilization closes the door on anything beyond itself and proclaims its functional self-sufficiency. *That* would be the true Dark Age.

When the individual sees himself as a citizen or other member of a limited group (nation, generation, profession, religion), he understands he must differ from other groups through a code, a ritual, morality, and behavior which identifies him. In ages of faith, such distinctions followed from the object of faith and the accompanying convictions and rites. In a technological world-society, the limitless framework and the cosmopolitan perspective discard the transcendental objects and the code they impose. They turn into immanent objects because technology adores only its own drive, its own accomplishments; it worships action with its visible products and suppresses the space and time for ritual. The profane alone remains. ◦C◦

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Teaching Religion and Religious Teaching

by Philip Jenkins

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Some years ago, I was in Washington, D.C., for the annual convention of the American Academy of Religion, a vast gathering of college professors teaching in the area of Religious Studies, when an astonished cabdriver asked me who all these hordes of people were. When I explained the conference to him, he whistled and said, "Think of it, 7,000 pastors all in one place." I'm not exactly sure if he was impressed or horrified: perhaps he was worried about his tips. But he reflects a common notion, that to have an academic interest in religion must reflect not only a faith commitment, but an active ministry. As the director of a Religious Studies program, I am periodically asked whether I am ordained, or if I am an ex-priest (I'm neither), and whether the title should be "Father" or "Reverend" (each has its arcane charms).

The sheer scale of the academic enterprise called Religious Studies can come as a shock to those familiar with customary complaints about the neglect of things religious in American public life, and especially in the universities, those fortresses of what Stephen L. Carter has termed the "culture of disbelief." In fact, most American universities, even the most avowedly secular, offer some sort of teaching in the general area of religion or religious studies. But while the field of Religious Studies is generally doing very well, its curious arm's-length relationship with the practice of religion has created a paradoxical environment that may well be unique within the academic world, in which the application of lived experience is often discouraged. In public universities at least, religion must of necessity be taught as something that those people over there do, not what "we" do. We must always be cautious about crossing the dreaded borderline that leads us into advocacy: from teaching *about* religion to teaching religion. One consequence is that while all religions may be studied and taught, least attention is generally paid to those traditions in which students are likely to have a serious or direct interest, and which are most likely to have an impact on the real world. All this at a time when an understanding of religion and religious motivation may for most educated people be the most glaring gap in the appreciation of politics no less than literature or art.

The situation is all the odder because it stands in sharp contrast to other academic trends which favor positions of advocacy and involvement, and the vigorous promotion of particular cultures or interest groups. Briefly, if we follow the logic of typical "diversity" programs on a campus, there is no reason why we should not abandon restraints about preaching from the lectern. I am certainly not suggesting this, but it is useful to ask why standards of self-restraint and objectivity have to be applied so rigorously in one realm, and abandoned so thoroughly in another.

The curious position of religious study in academe can largely be traced to the flowering of such programs and departments during the 1960's, an ecumenical age in which it was far from respectable to assert the superiority of any one tradition. There was therefore no need to view Christianity as any more deserving of treatment than Buddhism or Hinduism, and there was a sense that Christianity could safely be left to the seminaries. Moreover, the scholarship of mid-century tended to view all religions with equal skepticism, in that all were largely artifacts of interest to the anthropologist or psychologist. There was no sense of danger that Christianity itself would cease to be familiar, not least because so many of the Religious Studies teachers of that period were themselves trained in seminaries or divinity schools, and a sizable number were themselves ordained. And the students were presumed to derive from the wider "Judeo-Christian" culture, so why tell them about what they already knew?

Resistance to advocacy or proselytizing was also a prerequisite of teaching such programs in public universities, which were so conscious of being secular institutions. This attitude is

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Philip Jenkins is head of the Religious Studies program at Penn State University and the author, most recently, of Pedophiles and Priests: Anatomy of a Social Crisis *(Oxford).*

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symbolized by the physical construction of the chapel at my own university, Penn State, in which the architects militantly refused to include any specifically religious symbol, preferring instead a series of abstract designs equally incomprehensible to all, creating a state of ecumenical bafflement. We seemed to be practicing an "absolute separation of campus and state."

> Somewhere down the road, we need to think hard about when and where ideas of advocacy, involvement, and commitment belong in the university, whether inside or outside religion classes.

It was all reasonable enough in its time, but the situation then changed radically with the steep decline of general cultural literacy, which included familiarity with religious traditions. There was also a growing division between the religious liberalism of an older generation and a surging fundamentalism which is quite evident among many students—Christians most obviously, but also among Jews, Muslims, and Hindus. We live in an age that has been described, in the title of Gilles Kepel's recent book, as "the revenge of God," when ideas that would once have seemed intolerably fundamentalist have come to reshape politics, whether in North America or Israel, in the lands of Islam and Hinduism. And those ideas which have grown most explosively have been precisely those which had been declared safely dead in the 1960's, such as Orthodox Judaism, evangelical Christianity, Pentecostalism, even theocratic ideas like Christian Reconstructionism. In American politics alone, we think of the religious element that pervades such basic social debates as those concerning abortion, homosexuality, and women's rights, to say nothing of Middle Eastern policy. For tens of millions of Americans, unequivocal support for the state of Israel is literally a matter of faith. Most surveys suggest that perhaps 50 percent of Americans accept a biblically based view of creation, a figure with vast implications for educational policy. And yet, university courses on American religion still tend to treat contemporary evangelical and fundamentalist notions as some bizarre product of the backwoods, a kind of subset of snake-handling.

Of course this is a generalization, which would be challenged in some notable departments, but the basic observation is fair. If we just consider the case of Christianity, we find that higher education, like the wider culture, has lost much of the essential sense of familiarity with the everyday reality of the religion. This is suggested by the recent vogue for books on the strange and distant world of the Christian congregation or seminary. Fifty or 100 years ago, the ordinary reader might be expected to be interested in exotic and unfamiliar settings like the Upper Amazon or New Guinea. Today, we are presumed to be familiar with the basic assumptions of non-European religious groups, but are deeply interested in visiting the world portrayed in Gary Dorsey's recent book *Congregation*, which explains what it is like to live and worship in a New England congregation of the United Church of Christ: a peculiar modern exoticism. Even more alien is the spiritual realm depicted in Mike Bryan's *Chapter and Verse*, which records the experiences of the intrepid anthropologist who spent a year in a fundamentalist Southern Baptist seminary in Darkest Dallas.

In short, it is now Christianity which is presumed to be in need of scholarly exposition. The point was aptly made in a thoughtful article some years ago in the *New York Times* by Peter Steinfels. Commenting on the film *Black Robe*, which portrays the experience of 17th-century Jesuit missions to the Canadian Indians, Steinfels writes: "The contemporary audience comes to the theater more primed to be sympathetic to the shamanistic world view of the Indian tribes than to the ascetic missionary faith of seventeenth-century French Jesuits . . . that audience has been better introduced to the inner world of dreams and omens, the She-Manitou and forest spirits, than to the workings of Counter-Reformation spirituality. . . . There is a lesson here in these days of multiculturalism. No less than understanding other cultures, one of its greatest challenges may simply be a sympathetic understanding of the Western culture of a few centuries past."

Academic departments of religion reflect the wider culture, and this is most apparent in the course offerings for students. Courses that have been flourishing within Religious Studies still tend to be those in Asian religions, as well as preliterate cultures and ritual studies, while the hottest growth areas in the last decade or two have predictably involved issues of gender and sexual preference. Courses on women and religion proliferate, as do those on gay and lesbian religious issues. This does not mean that Christianity is omitted from the curriculum of public universities, and biblical studies are in good health. However, the main thrust of research and teaching tends to be in "Christian foundations" rather than in contemporary issues.

Many departments offer courses in Christianity, but relatively few in individual traditions or denominations, and even rarer are such themes of contemporary interest as Catholic issues, the Evangelical or Pentecostal traditions, or the Orthodox churches. Regardless of whether universities have a duty to teach "Western traditions," a case can certainly be made for coverage of such individual schools of thought, if only in terms of numbers: Roman Catholics alone are more numerous than the adherents of any non-Christian religion, and even the Pentecostals are probably outnumbered only by Hindus and Muslims worldwide. And as for their "relevance" (that vogue word of the last three decades), would anyone seriously try and understand the emerging Russian state without some appreciation of the historic contributions of Orthodox Christianity? Certainly students of politics know this, and not for nothing is the section on religion and politics the fastest-growing segment of the American Political Science Association. Getting God back into the classroom might be desirable; getting Him into the State Department seems essential.

The commonest type of "religious study" which students are

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likely to encounter is an introduction to world religions, which in various forms is a fixture of many large universities. The problems here can be summarized in the cynical description of this class, as "If it's Tuesday, it must be Buddhism." A session on Hinduism will generally lead to one on Buddhism, and one on "other Indian traditions," before moving on to the religions of China and Japan. Ultimately we progress through the monotheist traditions, with an inevitable if unintentional message of evolutionary sequence, until we reach the New Age and post-Christian views which, logically, would appear to be the endpoint of spiritual evolution. Furthermore, the structure of this comparative religion approach offers an uncanny if ironic echo of the old courses of scientific atheism that used to grace university curricula in the Soviet Union. The first weeks always began with a description of the common patterns of world religions, with the aim of showing that they offered nothing distinctive, and were thus all equally human creations.

Textbooks for this vast and profitable market vary greatly in quality, but most make quite depressing reading. Very much "written by committee," they bend over backward to avoid giving the slightest offense, which in practice means avoiding any form of evaluation, criticism, or controversy. To give an absurd example, one of the best-selling textbooks nationwide praises Muhammad to the point of asserting that his words could not have been produced by human wisdom alone, an explicit Muslim declaration of faith which is then immediately contradicted by equally fulsome praise for the founders of other religions. I would probably have preferred a positive Muslim bias to the anodyne desire to avoid insulting anyone.

In this situation, Christianity is considerably less than *primus inter pares*. While this religious tradition is depicted as one among several, it also suffers the drawback of being the spiritual home (however remote) of a majority of students and faculty. This causes a painful paradox: many students come to classes with a definite sense of conviction, quite possibly believing that the area under discussion is the most important thing in the world, literally a matter of life and death. Meanwhile, though at least some of the instructors can reflect this perspective in their personal lives, they are by definition forbidden from expounding their beliefs in detail.

Within the current ethos of higher education, a department is theoretically free to appoint someone who will make outrageous claims about the historical atrocities committed by Christianity, and generally be violently antireligious, as that can be defended on the grounds of academic freedom. The instructor can more or less get away with murder for any period after about A.D. 150, and can freely parade any sort of derogatory tale about the Church Fathers—and of course, some of them well deserve it. He can tell the worst and most discredited legends about early Christian crimes, and draw heavily on the anticlericalism of a Gibbon or a Voltaire. He can tell how Christian monks murdered the noble pagan philosopher Hypatia. But conversely, one has to be very careful about a positive faith commitment, for fear that it may spill over into advocacy, the eighth deadly sin.

At its worst, this suspicion about the religious believer can lead to a tacit demand that the teacher will exercise discretion verging on subterfuge. The dilemma is illustrated by the situation of departments which license instructors to teach occasional courses at a campus. Their résumés often describe years of theological training and ministry, and it is up to the academic unit or a committee to assess whether these people know the proper lines that exist between religious studies education and religious advocacy, and whether they will respect that. Does the person recognize the distinction between devotional and critical scholarship? Crudely put, do they know when to hold their tongues? The task is unpleasant in many ways, but an error can potentially open the way to complaint and scandal.

This issue of advocacy is ironic, as it is founded upon a notion of objective and dispassionate teaching that is diametrically opposed to much contemporary pedagogical theory, which simply denies that one can escape from one's ideological biases. Overt commitment is inevitable, and desirable. This theme is especially represented in feminist pedagogy, which seeks from the student a degree of personal involvement and "consciousness-raising" that would be utterly unacceptable in a religious context. Courses in Women's Studies commonly demand that students write a paper "from a feminist perspective," and pupils are graded on journals reflecting their intensified awareness of their gender roles and experiences of discrimination. Far from apologizing for such advocacy, feminist teachers assert that these experiential methods are the only means of teaching in this area. Obviously, no public university would tolerate an instructor who demanded that a term paper be written from a Christian or Jewish or Muslim perspective, with the implication that doctrinal error would lead to a lesser grade, and still less a course which demanded the presentation of an intimate spiritual diary. And how on earth would one grade such a thing? There are also classes which discourage male participation: Would anyone care to imagine what would happen to a college instructor whose "Christianity 101" course excluded non-Christians?

The approach to religious "advocacy" also runs contrary to ideas of cultural identity and authenticity. In the study of Islam or Hinduism, for example, it is now considered quite suspect for an academic unit to draw its teachers from Westerners who observe the tradition from outside. These tend to be seen as "Orientalists" interpreting an exotic world for the instruction and amusement of a First World American audience. What we need, we are told, is people who can overcome this colonialist perspective, to teach the traditional from within, so that here at least, it is not just legitimate but essential for a religion to be described by an adherent of the faith, if not actually a partisan.

A similar debate has recently erupted within American Judaism, and specifically in those universities in which Jewish Studies programs of great intellectual quality have proliferated. In July 1996, Queens College in New York City announced the appointment of a non-Jewish professor to chair its Jewish Studies program, a man of strong academic credentials in the study of Yiddish culture, though lacking the doctorate necessary for admission to the academic circus. The response was a furor from Jewish newspapers, on the grounds of ethnicity rather than lack of formal qualifications: one asked why Queens could not have found "a nice Jewish boy to do the job." The resulting controversy soon led to the resignation of the appointee amid charges of racial bigotry. Admittedly, the Queens College case involved the head of a program rather than merely the instructor of a course or courses, but the case raised questions about the relationship between teaching and commitment. If it is becoming difficult to imagine courses on Islam taught by a non-Muslim, Hinduism by a non-Hindu, and even Judaism by a non-Jew, then why is active Christianity not a strong recom-

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mendation, or even a *sine qua non*, for courses on Christianity?

One facile answer to this question is that Christianity, unlike the other religions, is associated with those dominant cultural and political trends that have become so unfashionable under stigmatizing terms like the "West," "imperialism," "hegemonic" culture, and so on. The argument always was weak, but is now essentially obliterated: Africa and Latin America have long been shaped by both Catholic and Protestant traditions, and today both are leading centers of Christian growth. How better to study non-European cultures and "diversity" than through a religion which for its first 1,000 years had the great majority of its adherents located in Africa and Asia, and which is rapidly returning to this situation? And logically, the best way to portray these traditions might be through the mouths of Nigerian Baptists, Korean Catholics, or Brazilian Pentecostalists. Even to broach the possibility is to see why it could never happen: they would just preach at the students, wouldn't they? The insulting assumption is that Christians in teaching positions proselytize, while members of other religions are merely stating and reasserting their cultural traditions and proper pride, making valuable contributions from their store of life-experience.

There is, in short, no logical reason why, on the analogy of other religious trends, public universities should prevent a development of "Christian Studies" taught from a Christian perspective. Opinions will differ about such a development, but I for one would find it unacceptable, on exactly the same grounds that I would reject the idea of advocacy teaching from any other perspective, feminist, racial, or ethnic nationalist. Like any other specialized ethnic or religious "studies" unit, such operations are only rendered tolerable if, at least in theory, participation is open to nonmembers, to nonadherents: if a Gay Studies program can occasionally be headed by a heterosexual, a Women's Studies unit by a man, a Jewish Studies operation by a Gentile, Black Studies by a white or Hispanic, and so on. The nature of people's interests means that, normally, these exceptions will not be required, but the possibility must be there. The same principle extends to the teaching of regular courses on different religions, where the best approach to the religious outlook of the particular instructor should properly follow the much-maligned military principle of "don't ask, don't tell." That will mean that we have Jews teaching courses on Hinduism, Muslims on Judaism, and—who knows?—Christians on Christianity.

How far such teachers should identify themselves for what they are, to speak from a given position of faith, is a vexed question that travels far beyond the world of religious study strictly defined. Somewhere down the road, we need to think hard about when and where ideas of advocacy, involvement, and commitment belong in the university, whether inside or outside religion classes. It is not only religious orthodoxies that produce fundamentalists and proselytizers, and having a secular university should not mean that it is legitimate to become fanatical about everything *except* religion.

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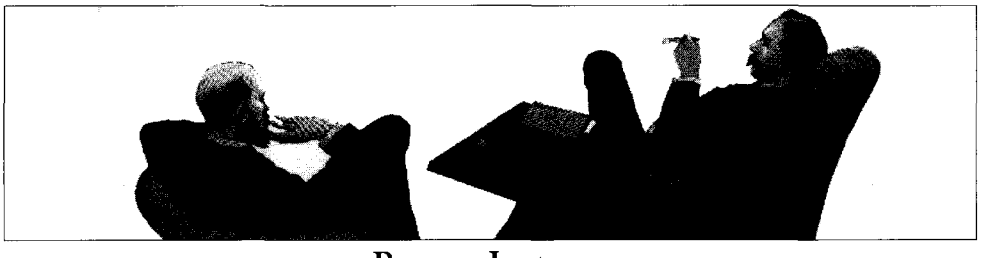

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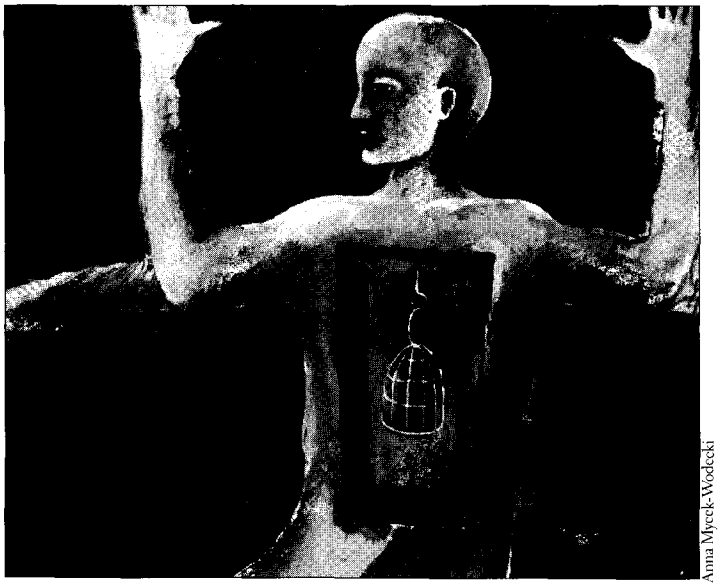
Germans in the Dock

by Curtis Cate

"The German may be a good fellow, but it is better to hang him."
—Russian Proverb



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust
by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.;
622 pp., $30.00

◆

This is a disturbing book: not simply because the author, an assistant professor of government at Harvard, points an accusing finger at the German people whom he implicitly accuses of having been Hitler's willing accomplices in the implementation of the "final solution" (the eradication of Jews from German society), but for its claim that the general mood of anti-Semitism, pervading all strata of German society in the 1930's and making the holocaust possible, owed a great deal to age-old anti-Jewish prejudices and stereotypes inculcated and nourished by centuries of Catholic and Protestant indoctrination. As Daniel Goldhagen sums up in a sweeping, simplistic formula: the "Jew," regarded as an instrument of the Devil in the medieval Age of Belief, came to be regarded as the Devil himself when, from the beginning of the 19th century on, religious faith declined, and with it the medieval belief in Satan.

No one can honestly accuse Daniel Jonah Goldhagen of not having done his homework. The notes and source references, filling more than 120 pages, attest to the diligence of the author's research during the months he spent reading books and plowing through thousands of pages of documents concerning special police battalions and other death-camp units preserved at the Ludwigsburg Center for the Elucidation of National-Socialistic Crimes, near Stuttgart, and other archives centers in Hamburg, Koblenz, and Munich. (One is surprised, nevertheless, by the absence of a badly needed bibliography.)

All of the quotations needed to buttress his thesis are there, from Martin Luther's ferocious anathema against Jewish money-lenders ("They hold us captive in our country. They let us work in the sweat of our noses, to earn money and property for them. . . . They . . . mock us and spit on us, because we work and permit them to be lazy squires who own us and our realm") down to Thomas Mann's initial sigh of relief ("the Jewish presence in the judiciary has been ended"), the theologian Karl Barth's denunciation of the Jews (an "obstinate and evil people"). In this context, Goldhagen quotes Pastor Niemöller's belated admission in March 1946 that "Christianity in Germany bears a greater responsibility than the National Socialists, the SS and the Gestapo."

Not surprisingly, this disturbing book, with its inflammatory title and provocative central thesis, stirred a furor in the German press last April, not long after the publication of the American edition, a furor that may well become a hurricane when the German edition is published. The general consensus—to judge by the newspaper and magazine articles I have seen so far—is that Goldhagen's book is excessively one-sided (an extreme case of "monocausality," as one reviewer put it) and not particularly original, being large-

Curtis Cate is a historian and biographer living in Paris.

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ly based on the pioneering research done by others (such as the American historian Christopher Browning).

Rudolf Augstein, the highly opinionated editor of Germany's most influential weekly, *Der Spiegel*, dismissed Goldhagen out of hand as a "nonhistorian," adding that "the end result is meager, one can even say, it is simply 'Nil.'" In the *Berliner Morgenpost*, Professor Michael Wolffsohn (who was born in Israel) was no less withering, remarking: *Déjà vu, Déjà lu*. . . . The doors, which were supposed to be wrenched open, are gaping wide. . . . The wheel once again has been invented and America rediscovered."

This may seem a trifle harsh. But in an article dramatically entitled "*Ein Volk von 'Endlösern'*" ("A People of 'Final Solutionists'"), published in Munich's *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the Berlin historian Norbert Frei was certainly on target in pointing out that "Whoever wishes to obtain a hearing in the hotly contested media market of the 1990's needs detonating theses."

The question of just how original and "trail-blazing" Goldhagen's explosive research really is, is one I shall have to leave to the specialists. What is certain is that he has put together a formidable indictment, based on the simple principle that since most Germans failed to speak out openly in protest, they were *de facto* accomplices who bear the burden of proof of their innocence. As Frank Schirrmacher noted in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, in criticizing Goldhagen's "mechanistic" psychology, "One often has the impression that here it is not a historian who is speaking but a computer operator who has pored through legal proceedings and documents as though they were components in a giant software program."

What most surprised me about this book is the almost mystical conception Goldhagen has of its key element, anti-Semitism. He describes it as a kind of undulating force, waxing and waning over the centuries and ever ready to erupt from the depths of the Germans' collective consciousness according to mysterious circumstances he makes no attempt to elucidate. His thesis, though he does not formulate it that succinctly, is essentially that "Ugliness lies in the eye of the beholder." The beholders in this case were the "ordinary Germans" mentioned in the subtitle of this book, while the ugliness lay in the preconceived stereotypes of the "scheming" or "money-grubbing Jew," "the instrument of Satan," and so on, which were harbored by average Germans who often had never dealt or met with flesh-and-blood Jews. This thesis is not one Goldhagen himself invented; it is based, as repeated source references make clear, on a book written by Bernard Glassman, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes without Jews: Images of the Jews in England, 1290-1700*—a study of the anti-Semitic sentiments that were rife in that country at a time when there were practically no Jews living there.

Far be it from me to belittle the influence of stereotypes and primitive dislikes on human behavior. A great deal of what passes for "thinking" (in fact mere opinion-holding) in daily life is nothing more than stereotypic image-forming about "others" based on superficial contacts. As Dostoyevsky had one of his characters exclaim, "What a stench would spread out over the world if each person said what he really thinks!"

Anti-Semitism, as Goldhagen knows well, is no new phenomenon. Nor is it something absolutely unique and *sui generis*; it is merely a particularly vicious, and often pathological, form of a more general phenomenon we call "xenophobia"—which, as the Greeks clearly realized, was not simply a "hatred" but a fear of everything that is strange, foreign, alien. Not the least curious aspect of Goldhagen's book is that, whereas the words "anti-Semitism and "anti-Semitic" appear on almost every page, there is virtually no discussion anywhere of the larger phenomenon of German xenophobia.

I write as one whose father in 1900 was sent to a boarding school in Berlin, where for the first few days he was brutally attacked and beaten up by groups of arrogant young Prussians until he, his older brother, and another American decided, for their own welfare, to move around everywhere *à trois*. None of this embattled trio was Jewish.

Years later, when I had to prepare a university paper on the German General Staff, I began to understand what had happened at this Berlin boarding school. Those young Prussian bullies were giving vent to what might be called the "Tirpitz complex": a deep, simmering, rancorous feeling of national inferiority and resentment directed against all Anglo-Saxons because the British had not only the world's greatest navy but also the world's largest empire, whereas, thanks to its previous divisions, the recently united Germanic Reich had been cheated out of most of its "rightful spoils" in Africa.

Shortly after the end of the Great War of 1914-1918, Marshal Foch remarked that "Bolshevism is a disease of defeated countries." The same could, I think, be said without too much exaggeration of the most vicious forms of modern anti-Semitism in Europe. The bacillus—the mythical image of the omnipresent, basically disloyal Jew as the scapegoat explanation for a country's decline—first made its fateful appearance in Vienna (where Adolf Hitler caught the "bug"), shortly after Austria's defeat by Prussia in the war of 1866. The disease then spread to France, after that country's humiliation during the brief Franco-Prussian War of 1870 (with Drumont's vitriolic pamphleteering and the bitterly contested climax of the Dreyfus case). After which, the epidemic infected the post-war German Reich, which had lost its emperor, which had been stripped of its colonies in Africa, and had been reduced to the modest dimensions of the Weimar Republic.

What I miss in Daniel Goldhagen's book is the kind of intellectual subtlety that Peter Viereck demonstrated years ago in *Metapolitics*, which, though written in 1941 before the "final solution" had been carried out in all of its gruesome horror, remains one of the best books ever written about Nazism. In it he cites the case of a wounded German soldier who, taken prisoner by the French during the campaign of 1940, needed a blood transfusion. "When approached by the doctor and blood donor, the prisoner insisted: 'I will not have my blood polluted with French blood. I would much rather die!' So the French racial inferiors could only shrug their un-Nordic shoulders with very Gaelic shrugs and—soon after—bury the prisoner, a martyr to the new religion of racism."

Here is another, equally illuminating quotation from the same book, which shows to what grotesque heights of lunacy Nazism's racist xenophobia could be carried:

> After the World War, General Ludendorff formed a nordic group to combat everything Christian. His motto: "War is the highest expression of the racial life." Ludendorff recognized that a religion of war

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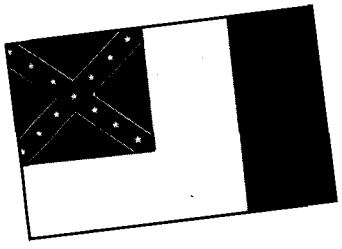
was more likely to win the new "total war" for which he prayed than a religion of love. He was converted by his bluestocking wife Mathilde, who wrote *Redemption from Jesus Christ*. Most Nazis consider themselves sufficiently subtle when they "discover" that all foes are tools of Judaism. Mathilde goes them one better in subtlety: even the Jews are tools. At a Nazi party congress she unmasked the subtlest plot in history, shrieking that Jews, capitalists, Reds, democrats, and Free Masons were all puppets of the insidious Dalai Lama, who pulled their strings from his fiendish laboratory in Tibet, where he plotted to persecute Germany.

I have quoted these two extracts because they put the anti-Semitic feelings of the Germans in their complex Pan-German, *Herrenrasse* perspective. It was precisely for this reason that most Jews living in Germany under the Weimar Republic—they numbered more than half a million—at first refused to take Nazism seriously. They regarded the rantings and ravings of Hitler, Goebbels, Julius Streicher (the hysterical purveyor of a kind of sex-crazed anti-Semitism), and others as the fulminations of a lunatic fringe.

This explains two extraordinary phenomena which go virtually unmentioned in Goldhagen's superficial account of the vitally important Weimar years: the German Jewish intellectuals' feeling of being completely "at home" in a Berlin, which—with Max Reinhardt (magnificently installed in the Bellevue Palace), Albert Einstein, George Grosz, Käthe Kollwitz, Kurt Weill, Otto Klemperer, Fritz Lang, and Erwin Piscator—was perhaps culturally the most dynamic capital in Europe; and the conviction, shared by virtually all of these intellectuals, that Nazism, even after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of the Reich, was a kind of transient phenomenon, unlikely to last. As Manes Sperber (himself an Austrian Jew) later wrote in his fascinating memoirs, he and thousands of other left-wingers stayed on not only because they were convinced that "it cannot happen here," but because they expected Germany to be shaken and saved from the "brown pest" by some kind of cataclysmic convulsion.

The cataclysm came—in the form of the diabolical Reichstag fire and the rigged elections of early March 1933. But by then it was too late to do anything but flee. For those, at least, who had the means to do so.



The Southern League

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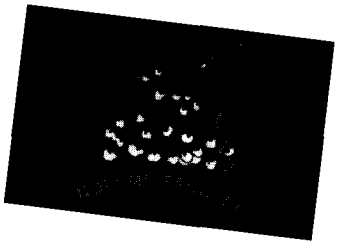

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Every Which Way But Up

by Samuel Francis

"The most perfect political community is one in which the middle class is in control, and outnumbers both of the other classes."

—Aristotle

Up From Conservatism: Why the Right is Wrong for America
by Michael Lind
New York: The Free Press;
295 pp., $23.00

◆

Readers of *Chronicles* may vaguely recall Michael Lind as the contributor of a few articles to this magazine in the late 1980's and early 90's, but they should have no problem recognizing many of the ideas that inform his new book. The most valuable derive directly from ideas this magazine has developed over the last decade, and as long as Mr. Lind sticks to those foundations, even without acknowledging where he got them, he stands on pretty solid ground. When he departs from them, however, and begins to think for himself, he immediately runs into trouble, and by the end of this, his second book in a year, he is way over his head.

Up From Conservatism is both an autobiographical explanation of why Mr. Lind ceased to be a conservative and an effort to expose the weaknesses of contemporary conservative thought and practice. As far as the first is concerned, it is never clear why anyone other than Mr. Lind should care why he was a conservative at all or why he stopped being one, and the reader quickly tires of the zest with which he chronicles the vapidity of a movement too dense to appreciate the genius he was offering and too dishonest to make use of his own virtue. As for the second, Mr. Lind is sometimes right and sometimes wrong in his criticisms, and—also quickly—it becomes apparent from his incessant sarcasm and his inability to grant an iota of good will or good sense to the conservatives with whom he used to hang out that he sports a rather large chip on his shoulder. Moreover, despite his expropriation of ideas from others without acknowledgment, it is also clear that he either misunderstands those ideas or has deliberately recast them to fit the "national liberalism" he now finds it convenient to espouse.

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

"National liberalism," he argues, is the tradition of Hamiltonian-Federalist-Republican Party nationalism, elevated by the "vital center" liberalism of Arthur Schlesinger, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, and Martin Luther King. It is a political persuasion that Lind imagines is virtually defunct in the United States today, having been discarded in "a realignment and a revolution" that is "bipartisan conservative" in its ideology. This "social revolution" consists in "the growth in the relative wealth, power, and prestige of the overclass."

The "overclass," a term Lind used in his first book but which he here attributes to Gunnar Myrdal, is the new national ruling class that he defines as "the credentialed managerial-professional elite, consisting of Americans with advanced degrees . . . and their spouses and children." Distinguishing the "overclass" from the neoconservative idea of the "new class," he later acknowledges that "the only postwar conservative who got matters right was James Burnham . . . [who] argued that the old bourgeois-capitalist order was giving way to a new system of managerial capitalism." Lind's "overclass," then, is merely an adaptation of Burnham's managerial elite, though Lind misses the point of the most important feature of Burnham's analysis of it.

Lind's thesis is that contemporary conservatism (he means what writers in *Chronicles* usually call "neoconservatism" and its variations) is really a formula that appeals to "radicalism," "populism," and "revolution" in order to advance overclass interests. "The chief beneficiaries of the radicalism of the right . . . are the small number of individuals and families that constitute the economic elite of the United States. . . . The costs of further artificial enrichment of the American overclass by the conservative program will be borne by the American middle class." There is a good deal of truth in this view, though in his elaboration of it Lind reveals a profound misunderstanding of both the nature of the overclass and the real meaning of the "conservatism" he has come to despise so much.

Lind misunderstands the overclass because (a) despite his endorsement of Burnham's 1941 analysis of it, he quickly forgets that the overclass is not new, and

Samuel Francis is a nationally syndicated columnist.

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(b) he therefore never betrays the slightest inkling that the power of the overclass is rooted, as Burnham understood, in the centralized managerial state constructed by the very "national liberals" whom Lind takes as his heroes. The overclass or managerial elite could not exist as a dominant group apart from its dependence on the federal government (and mini-leviathans at the state and metropolitan levels), the large corporations, and the managerial intelligentsia in the mass media and academic institutions that give the elite its credentials and technical training and also serve to redesign and discipline national culture on behalf of the elite's interests. The iron triangle among state, corporation, and intelligentsia distinguishes the overclass from the earlier elite of the bourgeois-capitalist order, which used the state only as expedient and always regarded governmental power as a potential threat to its interests.

Because it depends on the central state, the overclass cannot support a political ideology that seeks to restrict the powers and size of the state. Lind, however, imagines that the overclass is doing exactly that by its embrace of contemporary conservatism, which he also imagines is seriously committed to restricting the state; and he can sustain this argument only because either he knows very little about organized conservatism in this country today, or his thesis requires that he distort what he does know.

The "conservatism" that Lind seeks most to pulverize is neoconservatism and its allies in the Christian Coalition and the mainstream conservative movement it has come to dominate; the targets of his wrath are such neoconservative idols as supply-side economics, the "culture war" that neoconservative gurus claim is rooted in the "new class," the "Confederate Theory of the Constitution" as articulated by such paragons of juridical erudition as Clarence Thomas, and the "racism" and "new Social Darwinism" he spies in various recent books by conservative or neoconservative writers. The problem is that almost none of his targets seriously seeks the restriction of state power; at best most of them seek merely an "amelioration" of the existing state apparatus rather than a real restoration of authentic federalism. So far from conforming to the supposed need of Lind's overclass to restrict state power, the neoconservative part of the overclass seeks the preservation of the managerial state. That, indeed, is why it can plausibly be called "conservative" at all: what it wants to conserve is the managerial state constructed by the national liberalism that Lind adores and the overclass domination of American society that the managerial state makes possible.

But among others on the American right—the Old Right, the Hard Right, and the Far Right—there is a much more authentic opposition to the state; and, in part to sustain his thesis that the American right as a whole is dedicated to restricting the power of the state and in part to vent his own resentments at being ignored by it, Lind must lump them all together with the neoconservatives, arguing that the right in its entirety is a unitary movement controlled by the overclass. He correctly acknowledges that "in the 1990's, conservative intellectuals, bereft of a social base, continue to exist as a group only because of subsidies from foundations and corporations for their little magazines and think-tank careers. They are generals without an army." Hence, he argues, they have to conscript the only segments of the right that do have a mass following, which just happen to be those that are authentically opposed to the present size, scope, and extent of federal power. It is the Hard Right, not its neoconservative rivals, that does indeed seek revolution of a kind, against the overclass, the managerial state that keeps it in power, and the ideological vehicles that provide justifications for it, whether "national liberalism" or its cousin, neoconservatism; but because Lind never grasps the differences between the two warring camps of the right, he manages to miss entirely the class struggle that underlies their conflict. The war between the Hard Right and the neoconservative Soft Right is really a social and political struggle between Middle Americans and the overclass or managerial elite.

Unable to identify much support from baronets of the managerial regime like Bill Kristol, Bill Bennett, or Jack Kemp for any genuine reduction of state power, Lind must pack them all in the same basket as the emerging populist right, both violent and nonviolent, and it is at this point that he takes blithe wing into the happy skies of political paranoia.

> The contemporary American far right has both public, political wings (the Christian Coalition, the National Rifle Association, Project Rescue) and its covert, paramilitary, terrorist factions. Although the Christian Coalition and Operation Rescue officially denounce violence, the fact remains that a common worldview animates both the followers of Pat Robertson and Pat Buchanan and the far-right extremists who bomb abortion clinics, murder federal marshals and county sheriffs, and blow up buildings and trains.

The "common worldview," it turns out, is "summed up" as "ZOG"—the label that the violent and anti-Semitic fringe of the extreme right uses to designate the "Zionist Occupied Government." Lind merrily identifies ZOG with Buchanan's "Israel's amen corner" (a reference to the Israeli lobby, not the government) and Robertson's "New World Order," neither of which has anything to do with it. Indeed, in his sedulous researches to show that everyone on the American right from Norman Podhoretz to Gordon Kahl is an anti-Semite or a covert neo-Nazi fellow-traveler, Lind lapses into ranting.

Thus, his chapter on the "new Social Darwinism" claims that Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein, Peter Brimelow, and Dinesh D'Souza are all part of a conservative-movement plot to revive racialism, but he ignores how the books of these writers were received, as well as what the books themselves actually say. Murray and Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve* became a best-seller without the help of neoconservatives, who failed to promote it as they did Murray's earlier book *Losing Ground*, and who in fact were quick to drop it when it ran into frenetic denunciations from the left. Brimelow's *Alien Nation*, arguing for immigration restrictions, also was not well received by the neoconservatives and the mainstream right, which continue to be just as wedded to uncontrolled immigration as ever. D'Souza's book prompted the immediate resignation of two black colleagues from the American Enterprise Institute, and soon vanished from the neoconservative Christmas reading list. Moreover, of the three books, neither D'Souza's nor Brimelow's makes genetic arguments about race; only *The Bell Curve* does so—gingerly. Lind has nothing of substance to say in response to Murray's and Herrnstein's argument,

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merely regurgitating left-wing efforts to smear it as "pseudo-science" and "neo-Nazi." In any case, it is hard to see anything "Darwinian" about books that never invoke biology or genetics; while their timid reception by neoconservatism, once the left denounced them, demonstrates how neoconservatives continue to slobber when the left rings its bells, not how hell-bent they are on reversing all that the left has constructed.

Lind is even farther out to sea in his diatribe against Pat Robertson's book *The New World Order*, which he claims is a thinly disguised anti-Semitic tract. I confess to not having read Robertson's work, and have no disposition to defend it, but while Lind may be correct in arguing that *The New World Order* offers a simplistic and unsubstantiated conspiracy theory of history centered on "European bankers" as the moving agents behind the "New World Order," he nowhere produces a single quotation from it to support his claim that Robertson's conspiracy theory is directed against Jews. It seems true that Robertson (or his ghostwriter) made use of various books that are explicitly anti-Semitic and repeat various Jewish conspiracy theories that have floated around on the European and American right and left for centuries, but the many passages from Robertson's own book that Lind adduces, so far from identifying the Rothschilds or the Warburgs as Jewish, routinely refer to them as "German bankers" or "European powers." Lind himself acknowledges this without offering a glimmer of its significance. "Throughout *The New World Order*, as I shall show in further detail below," he puffs, "Robertson uses 'German' or 'European' where his anti-Semitic sources have 'Jewish.'" The point is that Robertson seems deliberately to avoid identifying the villains of his conspiracy theory as Jews. To him the point is not their Jewish, German, or European background, but rather their banking connections.

Nevertheless, Lind does raise a compelling question about the treatment of Robertson by such paladins of the Establishment right as William F. Buckley, Jr., and Norman Podhoretz, who strongly defend Robertson against Lind's accusations. Buckley and Podhoretz have never failed to denounce and purge even the most innocuous whiffs of anti-Semitism and crackpottery on the right, so "why have the mainstream conservatives who broke with the conspiracy-mongering leader of the John Birch Society apologized for the even more extremist leader of the Christian Coalition in the 1990's?" While Lind fails to make his case that Robertson is an anti-Semite, he is probably correct that Robertson's book is far more closely connected to anti-Semitism and bizarre historical views than is anything Buckley's and Podhoretz's previous targets ever uttered. Why, then, do they not denounce Robertson as well?

Lind's answer, and he is probably correct about this too, is that Robertson is strongly pro-Israeli (as Podhoretz acknowledges), as well as being far more powerful than the Birch Society. With one-third of the Republican Party identifying itself as the "Christian Right," any attack on Robertson from such "responsible conservatives" as Buckley and Podhoretz would probably backfire on them and wind up marginalizing the watchdogs themselves. Their smug determination to smother any breath of irresponsibility on the right is conveniently suspended when it runs up against "extremists" who happen to be more powerful than they, and who support some of the same goals.

Despite the validity of many of Lind's exposures of the intellectual poverty, dishonesty, and politically convenient acrobatics of mainstream conservatism, which he mainly derives from unacknowledged paleoconservative critics of the mainstream right, his book is too flawed in concept and execution to be either a reliable critique of the contemporary right, or a sound analysis of overclass political and social power. In fact, by its defense of the "national liberalism" on which the dominance of the overclass rests and its disguise of the close relationship between the overclass and the managerial state that Lind worships, *Up From Conservatism* does nothing to challenge overclass power, and much to bolster it. Yet, if the overclass cannot produce a more persuasive defense of itself than what Mr. Lind offers, its ability to resist the emerging challenge from more authentic Middle American adversaries of the managerial state may be less than most observers are prepared to admit, or most of its own members care to believe.

"A powerful mind"
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The Vision of Richard Weaver
Joseph Scotchie, editor

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The Stupid Country

by Herbert I. London

Dumbing Down: Essays on the Strip-Mining of American Culture
Edited by Katharine Washburn and John Thornton
New York: Norton; 329 pp., $25.00

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According to a recent Roper poll, only 13 percent of the college graduating class of '96 could pass a simple quiz on material suitable for elementary school students. Ninety-two percent of those taking this quiz failed to identify the author or the document that is the source of the phrase, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people."

At his "Million Man March," Louis Farrakhan claimed he was beamed up to a spaceship where he was provided with insights about life on earth.

A leading environmentalist said if the Amazon rain forest is destroyed there will be no oxygen left on earth, even though 98 percent of the oxygen is produced at sea.

A Senate committee on agriculture asked Jane Fonda, Jessica Lange, and Sissy Spacek to testify because they had appeared in films about farmers.

These items are not offered as definitive proof of social depreciation, but as the authors of the essays in *Dumbing Down* well realize, they are testimony to the direction we are headed. While this book does not identify a single culprit for our cultural decline, speculations on the passing of civility, on anti-elitism, undifferentiated educational standards, and slovenly speech point to radical egalitarianism as the primary villain. In a remarkable turn of events, equal opportunity has been transmogrified into equality of result, and equality before the law has been translated into equality of guilt and innocence. In no institution are these conditions more demonstrable than our schools, where, as Heather MacDonald explains, teachers of English composition emphasize the cultivation of "self esteem over competence and of self expression over the discipline of syntax." Gilbert T. Sewall writes movingly of the insinuation of relativism into every crevice of basic education.

This American disease of the spirit is not entirely surprising. As George Kennan points out, Alexis de Tocqueville argued in the 19th century that excellence would be the casualty of advancing egalitarianism. It is now taken for granted that elitism is a pejorative, a sign of having lost touch with the common man. Mass culture is the instrument of egalitarianism, turning everything in its path into homogenized pabulum digestible by all people, satisfying to all tastes. High culture has been crucified on the cross of democratization.

While the essays in this book are uniformly lively, and some of them are exceptionally good—such as Cynthia Ozick's "The Question of Our Speech: The Return to Aural Culture" and Armstrong Williams' "I Feel Good to be a Black Male"—several suffer from misplacement and others from questionable judgment. John Simon, for example, challenges Joseph Epstein's argument for discontinuing the National Endowment for the Arts by noting, "Any support, even to the wrong artists, is better than none; at least it stirs up controversy, and makes an inert public more aware that the arts exist and matter." Really? I prefer to buy my own tickets rather than have some government bureaucrat tell me how tax dollars should be spent on the arts. Sven Birkerts criticizes the Internet as a virtual world cut off from reality, atomizing relationships and the natural rhythms of life. Here again, my own experience is different. Without exaggerating the importance of the Net, which houses as much trash as archival emeralds, a communications instrument touching millions of lives could be accessible in every home to break the communications monopoly that once impeded the free exchange of opinion.

David Klinghoffer offers a persuasive argument against kitsch religion—religion that is so secularized it regards *New York Times* editorials as more spiritual than the Bible or the Torah. But if mainline Protestant religions and Reformed Jews are losing congregants to orthodox faiths, as is the case, this trend would seem to run counter to the book's thesis. Similarly, Carole Rifkind's piece on "America's Fantasy Urbanism: The Waxing of the Mall and the Waning of Civility" conflates a diminished sense of citizenship with private and commercial values. I would make almost exactly the opposite point: private property is continually encroached on by the spread of public space, usually under the banner of environmentalism, thereby challenging the traditional nature of citizenship. And I am startled to read the claim that "eating out is normally not at its best in America today." Nahum Waxman, who makes this point, must be living in another country. Sure McDonald's and Burger King are nothing to brag about, but in my judgment there are more fine restaurants, more gourmet treats available in modern America than was ever the case anywhere in history.

My difference of opinion with several essays has not diminished my heartfelt appreciation for a book that tackles America's "dirty secret" directly. As someone who has taught in the academy for three decades, I am well aware of the social signs that bear testimony to a diminishing sense of genuine accomplishment. In far too many academic quarters, ideology has replaced critical judgment and democratization of the spirit has undermined good breeding and character. My ears are sensitive to the sound of student grunts and "ya know," and I long for the day when language will be the inspiration for uplifting ideas. But that is not a day I will soon see. The inertial force of dumbing down is an avalanche that will not retreat on its own. All one can do is avert one's gaze, dream of noble moments, and hope for the best.

Herbert I. London is John M. Olin Professor of Humanities at New York University.

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A Lost Art

by Thomas Fleming

The New Austerities
by Tito Perdue
Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers;
218 pp., $20.00

◆

Readers first met Lee Pefley as an old man who returns to his hometown resolved to chastise public nuisances with a stick. Tito Perdue's first novel, *Lee* (1991), took some reviewers by surprise: the elegantly crafted naiveté seemed to strike a balance between Borges and (to my mind) Kenneth Patchen. What some of them seemed to miss is the obvious fact that Lee was the most reactionary fictional hero since Ignatius in John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Like Ignatius, Lee is a reader of old books but not the Latin fathers. It is the Greeks who inspired Lee with a vision of what human life might be like if we ever concentrated on growing finer instead of more human beings. Lee's historical model is the Spartan king who in old age went through the streets beating the people he met—a terrible offense in a society where only slaves, not free men, may be beaten. What Lee has grasped (and so few of us seem to know) is that most Americans in the 1990's are slaves by choice and deserve no better treatment.

Lee is a bookworm who has built his personal collection by robbing stores and libraries wherever he goes. The terrible old man, foiled in an attempt to steal an edition of Salvian defaced by a bar code strip, tries to check out a volume of Herodotus. The librarian insists upon clearing his application and checking his references. "Do I get the card?" he asks, and when she replies, "Absolutely not," he tells her: "I'm thinking of beating the sh-t out of you," and proceeds to push her to the floor, pinning her chin with his cane. "Succubus! Alright, just tell me this—and this is as easy as it gets for you—who was Galla Placidia?" Receiving no reply, he asks, "Goddamn it, you've been abiding here all this time with all these books, and you've learned nothing. Nothing!"

Giving the librarian a second chance (to identify Prosper of Acquitaine), he leaves her with a threat: "Now hear me well: I'm returning someday, maybe a year, maybe tomorrow, and you had best know something. You mark me?" Imagine the effect on librarians, teachers, journalists, book reviewers, clergymen, and other professional know-nothings, if they believed that some day they would have to face such judgment administered by a learned man with a cane.

We also run into Lee at the end of *Opportunities in Alabama Agriculture* (1994), as the protagonist's young grandson, the "most serious and glum of all his descendants." Grandfather, who parlayed good spelling into a teaching job and marriage to a propertied wife, offers little Leland some honey, which he describes as "knowledge-producing" and tells the boy he can see his whole future but refuses to reveal it. *Opportunities* is Perdue's strangest book so far. Although the setting is Alabama in the period between Reconstruction and World War II, it is an Alabama (at least in the first part) of an early geological age, unsettled by volcanoes and populated by stragglers, vagabonds, and eccentrics. It is a parallel-universe Alabama, whose connections with the real state and time only serve to reveal the strangeness of the place.

In *The New Austerities*, the earth has aged by the time Lee, in his 50's, decides to leave New York, where he works in front of a computer terminal, going "through . . . insurance applications, one by one . . . to see to it that all those who stood in need of coverage were not vouchsafed any." His days are spent in the agony of trying to avoid confronting the vermin with whom he works and rides the train. His colleagues find joy in management sessions, where they draw up targets and goals and mission statements; where they confess their personal failings and promise to work on them: "Look at me," says one of the managers, "I used to have negative feelings about lots of things. . . . But I worked at it, Lee. And now I'm like you see me to be."

Lee's only pleasures, apart from stealing books and dreaming of revenge, come at night when, after a few stiff drinks of vodka, he can look out at the night and listen to the horrors of the postapocalyptic world: America in the 90's. His barely (and not always) suppressed violence seems almost justifiable, since it is aimed at people who have sloughed off the humanity they were born with. Christian charity requires us to treat New Yorkers as if they were men and women with souls; reality teaches a different lesson. Poor Lee cannot even find the women, with their rain-plastered hair, alluring. As he remarks, later in the book, when he is asked about New York women: "There are no women . . . I got the last one myself. No, the women have all turned to men now."

If the women have turned into men, the men are "slime in thousand-dollar suits." Meeting one of them on the subway, Lee lifts his wallet without much effort and realizes that "the man knew he was being robbed, and yet feared to do anything about it." This, in the greatest city of "a country that might almost have taken up where the Greeks left off. And where," he asks a Southern redneck, "where is the American High Culture now?" The answer is "Not gone . . . Not begun."

Lee and his wife make their way out of New York in a car on which he has made one payment, headed back to see if there is any life left in the South. Even there, the signs of degeneracy—"a man with a modem in his lap"—are everywhere. The only hope for the South is to expel "all those who are not reactionaries" and to start "A new Civil War—this time we win." The way to begin, he suggests, is to dismantle the South's cities and ship them to New York, where they will not be noticed.

Satire, whether in verse or essay, is virtually a lost art that survives only in novels. Making fun of the political or cultural opposition is mere propaganda, the art of the baboon who defecates into his hand and hurls his poisonous ordure at the people staring into his cage. The heart of satire is a serious criticism made from within a society, a criticism in which not even the critic is spared. It is not a trivial art: Aristophanes, Juvenal, and Molière are serious artists, nearly as serious as their contemporaries Sophocles, Tacitus, and Racine. Satire is inherently reactionary, because the only standards by which a society can be judged come from the past. Radicals and Marxists realize this, and turn inevitably to Golden Age myths of equality; so do Christians and classicists, whose minds are forever walking in the streets of Athens or Jerusalem; only liberals are too stupid "to lift their garbage-glutting snouts up from the trough" long enough to wonder if life was always like this.

The rural South of his childhood has sorely decayed, but "back in the cities they would be slicing each other by now,

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chewing, sucking, envying, and going to cocktail parties." For Lee the Golden Age is not the splendors of the antebellum South, but the harsh and unremitting toil of his grandfather's generation. Coming across a photograph album, he sees the very house he is living in, the very window he is staring out of, but they are new and fresh. He looks at a picture of "three soiled men . . . his people, farmers and mail carriers and the like who, starting from nothing, had not only brought off an Age of Integrity, but had thought to take pictures of it as well." His hatred evaporates as he contemplates such pictures, in which "every human error was redeemed, by the exercise of hardness and lovely gorgeous poverty." Labor *omnia vincit, improbus* or, to use the tongue that Lee would prefer: *krupsantes gar echousi theoi bion anthropoisin*.

Neither conservative nor liberal, but a reactionary radical, Tito Perdue has written some of the best satire on contemporary America, and he has put his criticism in the form of novels which can hold their own with the best postmodern fiction.

Thomas Fleming is the editor of Chronicles.

The Well Wrought Life

by J.O. Tate

Cleanth Brooks and the Rise of Modern Criticism
by Mark Royden Winchell
Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia;
510 pp., $34.95

◆

This book is certainly a book—the book—for those interested in its subject, but I believe that it is a book, too, for those who have no particular interest in Cleanth Brooks (1906-1994), or in criticism. In telling the story of a man's life, Mark Winchell has also, by placing that life in context, addressed many issues of broad concern.

The son of a Methodist minister, Cleanth Brooks was born in Kentucky. His attendance at the McTyeire school, where he studied Latin and Greek, set a seal on him early, as did his religious background. But Brooks did not find his calling until relatively late. He entered Vanderbilt in 1924, at a time when that university had on campus its most illustrious students and teachers, and when the South was already in its literary Renaissance. Poetry and criticism were in the air: the Fugitives were already publishing. John Crowe Ransom was teaching, and Donald Davidson, Allen Tate, Andrew Lytle, and Robert Penn Warren were on the campus, or the horizon. The young Brooks read a poem to one of the last meetings of the Fugitives and discovered the power of close reading in his senior year at college. Later on, his own works were to be a revelation to many a college student.

Brooks wrote a master's thesis at Tulane on Elizabethan poetry, and met his future wife in New Orleans. But he was soon off to Oxford in 1929 as a Rhodes scholar, and not long after that he was teaching English at LSU. There he and Robert Penn Warren began a pedagogical revolution with their textbooks, the most famous of which was *Understanding Poetry* (1938), and edited one of the finest of all literary quarterlies, the first series of *The Southern Review*. By 1947, Brooks was at Yale and had published his most imposing book on poetry, *The Well Wrought Urn*. His work on Faulkner led to four books, the first of which, *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (1963), is unquestionably the finest single volume devoted to America's premier modern novelist. By the time Brooks retired from Yale, he was ready to leave an academy that was no longer the community of scholars that in one form or another he had loved and served. Hearing a fatuous paper at a conference in 1993, he finally declared, "For over 60 years now, I've tried to teach people how to read literature. After hearing this paper, I'm about ready to give up." Although it was not in Brooks' character to give up on anything, after a long and productive life he was ready to go.

Needless (or needful) to say, Brooks' intimates included in a special sense such luminaries as William Shakespeare, John Donne, John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Alexander Pope, William Wordsworth, John Keats, Lord Alfred Tennyson, W.B. Yeats, and many another distinguished creator. His response to their work is a fascinating story in its own right, and so are the stories of his relations not only with the Agrarians but with such notables as Willmoore Kendall, Eric Voegelin, Katherine Anne Porter, Robert B. Heilman, Maynard Mack, and others. But the best thing about Winchell's life of Brooks is his poised and decisive account of the rise (and fall) of modern criticism. Cleanth Brooks, rational and decorous as well as radical and aggressive, is the hero of that account of what followed upon the triumph of the "new criticism" he embodied. Winchell sums up more than 40 years of reaction to Brooks and what he stood for as well as it can be stated:

> . . . by stressing paradox, irony, and ambiguity in literary study, the new critics were cautioning us against accepting facile and simplistic explanations of any aspect of reality. . . . by making us more careful students of language, they made it more difficult for authoritarian and venal interests to manipulate society with clichés, euphemisms, and jargon. . . . Whatever their shortcomings, the new critics realized that the enemies of literature were the enemies of humanity itself.

A good man, one as modest as he was great, Cleanth Brooks was a preternatural gentleman as well as an accomplished scholar. When the academy and criticism were the domain of such as he, his work and his demeanor were literally exemplary. Those days are gone, but the recovery has already begun. One of the signs of that recovery of mind is the very book that tells the story of a career, a life, devoted to the thought that literature is not politics but a special kind of knowledge. The ironic implication of tragedy imposes a limit to totalitarian, utilitarian, and egalitarian agendas, and the proponents of those agendas know it very well. That is why they have done so much to destroy the very concept of literature itself. Mark Winchell's life of Cleanth Brooks is therefore more than the account of one man and of modern criticism; it is a book that speaks eloquently to pressing national issues about education, the curriculum, and the canon. I dare say it is the best critical biography we have seen in years.

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

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Letter From Inner Israel

by Jacob Neusner

Jews on Abortion

◆

"Mommy let me live!" screams the tasteless headline of a pro-life ad, complete with scary pictures of a baby's diary: "May 1: Today my parents gave me the gift of life. . . . One week has passed and look, I'm no longer a single cell," and so on through the year. Here are the concluding entries:

> July 24: Today I went with my mother to the abortion committee, and within minutes my fate was sealed. At the committee no one attempted to explain to my mother the significance of the act she is about to perform. I am convinced that if they showed her a picture of me, and she knew that I am essentially complete in all aspects, she would not think of killing me. July 25: The date when I am to die has already been set. But perhaps someone with compassion will still come and explain to my mother what she is about to lose and give her and me true happiness. July 26: My mother received the notice to come to the hospital tomorrow to perform the operation, and my life in the last hours which remain is to be ended with horrible instruments. There is nothing left but for me to plead to my mother for my life: Mommy! Have pity on me! Spare me my life! I want to live.

Here is uncompromising, brutal, powerful pro-life advertising—four pages of it, in color, with photographs of the living baby in the mother's womb—in a mass-circulation newspaper.

Now, this is what we expect to find in Christian Coalition or in traditional Catholic newspapers, but where did I find it? In the *Jerusalem Post*, the English-language daily published since pre-state times in Israel. This means that a powerful, forthright, and unapologetic pro-life voice has emerged within Judaism too, not on the fringes, but at the very center, in Jerusalem (with representatives throughout the world) and at the heart of Orthodox Judaism. The organization is called Efrat, "The International Organization for Saving Jewish Babies," and according to the paper the organization is "engaged in a struggle to prevent the intentional termination of pregnancies . . . the story of Efrat is a wonderful success story of saving Jewish babies." The *Jerusalem Post*'s piece included stories about mothers who took risks to have their babies, and how glad they are they did; about the power of persuasion, with Efrat representatives arguing in favor of life; about Dr. Bernard Nathanson, the Jewish gynecologist and abortionist who repented and whose story is told in *The Silent Scream*.

True, Efrat prefers information and guidance to demonstrations and violence. Its members—doctors, psychologists, social workers, rabbis, and public figures—approach mothers in the State of Israel who are considering abortion and who have come before hospital committees for permission. Their policy is simple: "We cannot prevent a woman from having an abortion if she really wants one and is determined to go ahead. But it is our humanitarian and professional duty to explain to her all the repercussions of her actions. Knowledge of all the facts will allow the woman to make the right choice."

Efrat (which is located at 10 Halluy St., Jerusalem 91062, Israel) not only saves fetuses from abortion but supports expectant mothers who find themselves constrained by poverty to abort their babies: "Efrat is certain that it is possible to greatly reduce the unjustifiable slaughter of fetuses, if we all support this important institution whose sole aim is the rescue of Jewish children. When women give birth, Efrat is there with food, diapers, encouragement, and allowance."

What is quite remarkable about Efrat is what it does not do: it does not appeal to that eternal presence in Jewish life, the holocaust. Efrat does not tell the stories of the million Jewish children put to death in the German catastrophe, nor does it formulate its message in the language of "not handing Hitler any more victories," even though voluntarily killing Jewish children is precisely what the Germans of that period undertook. Its purpose is stated plainly in positive language: "to rescue Jewish children." But in the present context, the language of "rescue" bears its own subtext. Even more remarkable is that its leadership encompasses Orthodox Rabbis and lay people throughout the world, and the organization clearly calls for its deepest rationale upon the sanctity of life that marks the religion, Judaism. This is not the face that much of Western Judaism shows the world, but the fault does not lie with Judaism.

The religion makes its statement, and appealing to the Torah—not merely to worldly utility or to secular memory—Judaism motivates Efrat and similar organizations to do the work that the faith must deem sacred: a true *mitzvah*, an act of religious piety. And then, speaking for themselves as individuals, numerous Jews will gladly tell you, "Judaism is pro-abortion," though the language they prefer is "pro-choice." National Jewish organizations, both secular and religious, align themselves with the abortion cause, and the single most powerful branch of Judaism in the United States, Reform Judaism, is explicit on the matter. Secular organizations take the same view. Ethnic Jews take an active role in the entire phalanx of abortionist organizations and institutions, and in many cases they appeal to their ethnic origin as an explanation for their devotion to "choice."

How are people to make sense of these

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contradictory facts? First, not everybody who identifies himself as ethnically Jewish practices the religion, and in the United States many do not. Second, just as there are many Christianities, which intersect in a few things but part company in many, so there are diverse Judaisms, each with its own account of what the Torah requires of holy Israel, God's first love. Some of the several Judaisms present the Torah in its classical formulation, others do not.

But if people want to know the view of abortion that Judaism has set forth through the ages and that today shapes the aspirations of the vast majority of Jews who practice Judaism in the State of Israel, Europe, and the outlying Diaspora, listen carefully to Efrat. The Torah of Sinai speaks through them—and pleads, along with them, "Mommy, let me live!" But the language is its own: "Choose life."

Christians can make sense of the diversity of Judaisms when they compare Catholic Christianity's understanding of the task of Peter with that of Unitarian or Mormon Christianities, Anglican liturgy with the evangelical, the doctrine of the Church put forth by Pope John Paul II with that of Billy Graham, and the Christologies preached in any ten churches chosen at random in St. Petersburg, Florida, with those set forth in St. Petersburg, Russia. The Church's one foundation may well be Jesus Christ the Lord, but in everyday life, many Christianities compete, and the same is true for Judaisms. That is why, when pro-abortionists claim to represent and reflect "the Jewish" or "the Judaic" view, the right questions are, "Which Jew?" and "Which Judaism?"

I offer the prayer that, when God sorts matters out, He will hear the unborn child whose still small voice Efrat hears, as Elijah heard God's voice in the silence of the storm—and whose life and whose mother's life and happiness Efrat deems holy. And that is the commanding voice of Sinai that, for here and now, we must call the Torah. If, as the Torah teaches, ours is the God of mercy, then that prayer must find its way to God's ear.

Jacob Neusner is Distinguished Research Professor of Religious Studies at the University of South Florida and Professor of Religion at Bard College. With his son, Noam M.M. Neusner, he has recently published The Book of Jewish Wisdom *(Continuum).*

Foreign Correspondences

by William Mills

Down Ecuador Way, Part I

◆

Latin elections are such vibrant theater, unlike our plastic-coated, high-tech soap operas, I thought I might catch the presidential election in Ecuador this year. Besides, there was an off-again, on-again war with Peru to give an edge to the trip. Not long into the journey I got all the edge I would need for the summer. The first leg of my Continental flight from Houston to Panama was interrupted by the captain who tactlessly began, "Ladies and gentlemen, I've got some bad news." Before I left, the Valujet crash was still on the national mind. Halfway to Panama, the crew had just discovered that the oxygen equipment was not functioning properly and that we could not make it on over the Andes into Quito, which is just under 10,000 feet. Thus another night in Houston.

Approaching Quito the next night thousands of twinkling city lights confirmed what the lady next to me explained, that the city was long and narrow, set between two ranges of mountains. The South American Explorers Club had booked me into an inexpensive place called the El Loro Verde (the Green Parrot). The cantina across the street provided gratuitously a salsa beat until the wee hours, and there were seven eruptions of what sounded like gunfire, but could have been fireworks. Nearly every business and apartment house has an armed guard. I moved the next day to a quiet neighborhood and took a room in a house where it turned out mostly American college students of various ages lived.

The first primary had already taken place and the candidates had been whittled down to Jaime Nebot of the Partido Social Cristiano and Abdalá Bucaram of the Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano. Nebot had come out on top and most of the pundits and pollsters were predicting a Nebot win. This meant the voters of the small conservative party and those of the several leftist parties had to choose between the two. And I mean *had* to

Ambassador Romero.

choose, for voting is compulsory in Ecuador. If you do not get your receipt for voting, there are many things you cannot do thereafter, like get a passport, municipal permits, etc. One could, however, leave the ballot blank, "*blanco,*" or vote "*nulo,*" "no one." The percentage of *nulos* went as high as 20 percent in one province, with a national average of 11 percent "*nulos*" and one percent "*blancos.*"

A couple of days before the second primary vote on July 7, I visited the American ambassador's residence for the 4th of July picnic (held actually on the 5th). Ambassador Romero and his staff were decked out in Western clothes and a cowboy band called "Texas" provided the music. The picnic was open to all American citizens living in the country who had the price of admission (4,000 sucres, or about $1.33). There were pie-eating contests, climbing-the-greased-pole contests, and even some line-dancing Texas style. Besides the traditional hot dogs and hamburgers, we had American gyros and falafel. Nothing was free so the taxpayers back home did not have to pick up the tab. "Republicans Abroad" even had a booth. The few businessmen I was able to talk with seemed to think a Bucaram victory would be a disaster. The ugly word "nationalization," of everything from banks and insurance companies to oil, was uttered.

Out on the street, nobody seemed to know what Abdalá Bucaram would do. Nebot was more of a known quantity. It was felt, I gather, that he would be a continuation of the Sixto government. There had been an extended effort un-

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der Sixto to control inflation, which had been 60 percent. It was brought to 25 percent in 1995 and was predicted to be 26 percent in 1996. This kind of austerity did not permit the social programs that people thought they ought to get, and Bucaram, from the opposition, filled this vacuum. He out-promised Nebot.

My contact in Quito, Fernando Sanchez, suggested we take a "walking poll." He felt the predictions of a Nebot victory were premature. We walked the streets of the city and simply asked. First we ran into some beggars. "Who are you voting for?" "Abdalá." "Why?" "He's going to give us housing." On another street, a taxi driver: "Nebot." Interestingly, one candidate was known by his last name, the other by his first. Fernando explained to me later that Abdalá would allow provincial governors and mayors to act against the drivers' interest. A middle-class couple: "It's a good question. Don't know. Probably *nulo*." One military man said he should not answer the question, and an Otavalo Indian in his distinctive blue poncho and immaculate white pants said he was leaning toward Abdalá. Though the city of Quito is not typical of the country at large, the score ended up: Abdalá 2; Nebot 1; *nulo* 1; cannot answer 1.

I was told that Abdalá had promised 150,000 new homes if he was elected. Modest homes, to be sure, but new homes. How? Government subsidy. It might make American home buyers feel a lot better about their interest rates to know that home mortgage interest in Ecuador is between 40 and 55 percent. Should the government borrow the money to subsidize housing partially (if anyone will lend it to them), it is inevitable that the anticipated 26 percent inflation for 1996 will jump through the roof. This is what is passing for "populism" in Ecuador.

The second major aspect of the campaign, like the first, may remind *Chronicles* readers of the '92 campaign in the United States. Abdalá does not play the saxophone, but he can sing and dance. I have seen him sing and dance on television. Like a "man of the people," he does both about like the people do, which is not very well. But that's the secret of being just one of the people. He out good-ol-boyed Nebot, or rather Nebot did not know how to good-ol-boy. Next go round he needs to take an Arkansas seminar in "Shuckins."

Similarities go further. Abdalá had made, as one politician noted, imprudent remarks about the military (which is not permitted) and spent six years in exile in Panama. While there he was found with a kilo or so of the magic white powder in his car, which he said had been planted by his enemies in Ecuador. Earlier he was absolved by Congress for malfeasance in office as mayor of Guayaquil, but his sister, while mayor, stole money from the city and has since been residing in exile in Panama herself. Just family traditions.

Tired little merchant from the market.

As near as I can tell, in Ecuador a wall without graffiti is like a day without sunshine; walls and most days had lots of both. One masterpiece: "*Abdalá miente por cado una de sus espinillas en su cara*" ("Abdalá lies for every one of the pimples on his face"), which is quite a lot. All of which led to his upset victory over Nebot. Nebot carried the provinces of the two major cities, Quito and Guayaquil, but lost the other 19 provinces.

South America must seem ripe for takeover attempts. Abdalá is of Lebanese descent, and upon his victory his village of Guach El Hajar in north Lebanon broke out in celebration, guns and all. Which has led one wit to write about South America's "three kings from the Orient." Fujimori, president of Peru, is of Japanese descent, and Carlos Saul Menem descends from Syria.

Immediately following Abdalá's victory, the markets in New York reflected the fear of what he might do, and dropped. Shortly after this, Abdalá went to Panama for rest and recuperation and was photographed with his exiled sister, Elsa. Famous and infamous around Ecuador is a woman by the name of Mama Luecha. She is a tough gangsterette who ran the local markets in her town. Finally she was imprisoned. A graffito in Quito reflected the new change in a couplet: *Mama Luecha esta presa / Elsa regresa* (Mama Luecha is captured, Elsa returns). Will Elsa return to Ecuador, I asked a pundit? If Abdalá can pack the Supreme Court.

What does Abdalá's victory presage for Ecuador? From those I talked to, no significant change. In an interview with Rene Maugé, a presidential candidate in

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Free enterprise in Sasquisilí, Ecuador.

a previous election and a university professor, he told me that in his opinion there was no real difference in Nebot and Abdalá Bucaram. He had been Abdalá's teacher. As to the promise of housing, some of it could be done, he thought—he had written a long article explaining how. He remarked that Abdalá had a great potential for histrionics. Elsewhere I had heard that when Abdalá spoke before a large group of businessmen in Quito, his speech was calm and reasonable. Apparently his public performances are largely acts fitted to his audiences, Charlie Chaplin mustache and all (his opponents would say Hitlerian). It is Ecuadorian law that 30 percent of the budget should go to education, which has so far not happened. To the question about whether the law would now be fulfilled, Maugé said it would be very, very difficult. At the most, 18 percent, he thought.

To my question, "Who started the border war between Ecuador and Peru," Maugé said it was difficult to tell. I was surprised to learn that the Indians were playing a big role in the fighting, although the ones on the Ecuadorian side have not been traditional enemies of the ones in Peru. The Peruvian army did not realize, Maugé said, how much resistance there would be. For people in Lima, it was rather a remote disturbance, but for Ecuador, which had already lost much of its land to Peru (land that it still claims), the struggle was a very important matter, one of national honor.

Fernando Sanchez, my aide-de-camp, insisted that I should go to the Café Madrilon in the oldest part of Quito, near the Presidential Palace and the Cathedral, if I wanted to get a sense of what Abdalá's government might presage. A cross-section of people, especially retired bankers, lawyers, and doctors, sit around tables in the rather plain, high-ceilinged café, and discuss the great matters of the day. The couple of times I visited, I also met an electrician and a well-known boxer there. Mr. Sevilla-Suarez, a retired banker, and others, thought there was no chance of any nationalization of industries, and that there would be no shift to the left. Most of the *habitués* thought the government would be a continuation of Sixto. One thing they had apprehensions about was the war. Sevilla-Suarez said he hoped Clinton would bring about a resolution: "He should order it." I asked, "Can he?" and was answered, "Why not?" All the candidates feel they must come to the Madrilon, they said. Political problems have been resolved right here in the café. So influential is the group, that when Sixto's vice president wanted to close it down to get rid of the locals (which he failed to do) the group announced that if the café were closed down it would move to the Palace for coffee.

Enrique Ayala Mora, a socialist and perhaps the premier historian in Ecuador, gave me a quick overview of recent Ecuadorian political history. Significant events were the change in the party system after 1947, which determined that the parties were no longer run by the government but by a tribunal, and the 1978 constitution, which for the first time was not dictated but voted on by the people. Ayala observed that one of the main problems for Ecuador is that the government does not collect 40 to 50 percent of the taxes. Salaried workers have to pay, but big business no. The corruption is acute.

What is needed for Ecuador to change course? Almost everyone agreed that the taxes have to be collected and the people educated. Ayala said it is not just a matter of money, but of political will. Ecuadorians do not need to be taught free enterprise.

Later I visited the village of Sasquisilí, south of Quito, on market day and found pure free trading in farm products, clothes, tools, and electronics, as well as a picturesque animal auction. What is needed is universal schooling, especially in the trades and technical fields. Plus capital, which is difficult to come by. With a population of about 11.5 million, half the people do not have regular work and 75 percent are poor, according to one source. Not only will foreigners, especially foreign businessmen, be watching Abdalá Bucaram's government, but more important, so will the millions of Ecuador's poor and unemployed.

These problems notwithstanding, the people are more cheerful, their behavior more upbeat, than what I often find in ex-Soviet countries. Here the churches have not been shut down and thousands of religious murdered. Certainly the weather is better, especially in the sierra. About Ecuador's thriving cultural life—especially Ecuadorian artists who paint like angels and a couple of nuns who may be—more next month.

William Mills is a novelist and poet whose latest work of fiction is Properties of Blood.

Letter From Oklahoma City

by Susan Lanier Anderson

Compassion, Inc.

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April 19, 1995, is a date etched in the minds of all who live in Oklahoma City, because it was on that day at 9:02 A.M.

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that the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was bombed. Just as most Americans alive at the time of President John F. Kennedy's assassination remember where they were when they heard the news, so almost every person living in Oklahoma City or its suburbs can tell you what he was doing when he felt and heard the explosion.

I was teaching English to foreign students at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, 15 miles from downtown Oklahoma City and the Murrah Federal Building. We were on the third floor of a former dormitory, which was being renovated for use as an administration and classroom building. Constructed in the era when elements of traditional beauty still enhanced college campuses, the old mammoth boasted granite floors, a winding staircase with polished wooden banisters, and marble window seats beneath enormous windows on the landings. At 9:01, my students were beginning to take an examination, and I was performing the ritual of scrutinizing them. Once they seemed sufficiently engrossed, or at least deterred from cheating, I planned to settle down with *Fifty Russian Winters* by Margaret Wettlin. At 9:02, every head jerked up at the loud crash, which sounded exactly as if the construction crew working on the clay tile roof had somehow managed to hoist a very large and very full trash dumpster to the roof and then drop it squarely to the ground. While such a sound was unsettling, we were so used to the noise of our building's reconstruction that we were more awestruck than frightened. Whatever it was, it was clearly over and I motioned for the students to resume their test-taking. All did, except one young Saudi Arabian, who looked alarmed and found it hard to concentrate. In retrospect, I suspect that he had at least one other possible explanation for the sound and was surprised that I had ignored it.

Most of us here in Oklahoma City did not know immediately what would make such a sound. For all that CNN showed us of the Gulf War and Bosnia, most Americans do not know the sounds of war. Television news generally shows either the aftermath of explosions, replete with weeping bereaved women, or it displays soundless computer graphics of fuzzy squarish targets followed by a flash of light, indicating by its position whether or not our glorious American technology has produced a direct hit, a bit like the children's game "Battleship." For those of us on the outskirts of Oklahoma City that day, it was again to our televisions that we turned to learn the explanation for what we had heard. Walking past the student lounge after class, I noticed the grieved and serious, but unsurprised, face of my Kazakh student among others watching the television. I stepped in for a moment and learned the news.

Responses during the first days varied widely. The response of one of my colleagues was to buy copies of all the newspapers published within a 500-mile radius for the next few days, more as souvenirs, I think, than for information, since they all reported basically the same thing. According to the *Daily Oklahoman*, the city's only major newspaper, and according to local television and radio coverage, some people reacted to early reports of Middle Eastern involvement by treating local Arabs with deepened suspicion and, in several cases, with outright hostility. One man reported that neighbors banged on his door so fiercely that his terrified pregnant wife miscarried their child. The higher-ranking officials of the BATF office located in the Murrah Federal Building had responded in advance to the tragedy by not having shown up for work that morning. The secretaries who worked in the BATF office responded by dying a violent death. (For weeks after the bombing, the *Daily Oklahoman* published lists, classified by job, title, and office of the dead, as they were unearthed and identified. Since the date invited the connection of the bombing with the Waco event, my husband and I looked specifically to see whether BATF officials were also killed in the bombing or had inexplicably escaped harm.) During the ensuing weeks of searching the rubble for the bodily remains of victims, Oklahomans drove their cars with headlights on as a show of sympathy, awareness, and solidarity. On April 19, 1996, the headlights were once again lit, as drivers silently proclaimed that those who had lost loved ones were not forgotten.

The most common response by far, however, can be summed up in the expression, "Not here!" Things like this just don't happen in middle America, not in Oklahoma. I heard it over and over again. Oklahomans were only expressing a typically American naiveté. American involvement in the wars of the 20th century has always occurred "over there" or "somewhere in the Pacific" or in the "European theater." Theater! Who thought up *this* way of naming a war zone: as if we were all simply watching a play! Now, however, it has turned into a Brecht play, during which the actors on stage turn and pelt the audience with stage props. "No fair!" the audience cries, forgetting that there never was a protective wall of separation between the stage and the rest of the theater; there was only air.

Faced with the opportunity to feel what it might be like to be an Iraqi or a Bosnian Serb on the business end of a "smart bomb," or, more generically, what it feels like to live in the majority of the world's countries—most of which have been touched by some sort of mass violence in this century—we instead learned about self-pity and denial. One specifically morbid response of the television and news magazine media was to focus on the children in the daycare center as the bombing's most important victims. Perhaps it was because they were little and cute and could be carried away by burly firemen with soot-streaked, grieving faces. Perhaps they represented how small and vulnerable everyone felt in the face of such a tragedy.

Garnering a certain measure of sympathy is inherent in the telling of a story and is part of what makes one thing newsworthy and another not. It is relevant that people were killed, maimed, widowed, and orphaned by the bombing. If the perpetrator had bombed a grove of trees in Roman Nose State Park, for example, the story would rightly be thought relatively unimportant. The effect of an event on human lives is an essential part of a news story. When, however, the news media go beyond establishing an item's newsworthiness and attempt to get their audience to suffer vicariously with the victims of a disaster, this is going too far.

Human compassion carries with it, by definition, the desire for action to relieve the person's suffering. Yet the compassion of the newscast's audience, however sincere, cannot reach the Liberians, the Bosnians, the orphaned children of soldiers, or the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing. True morality belongs instead on a local level, and matters of compassion should be left to the families, the churches, the communities, the neighbors, the Red Cross. Long-distance, vicarious suffering is simply not real suffering. It tricks us into thinking

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that we are suffering when we are not, that we are compassionate when we are not, leaving us proud participants in virtual morality.

Children are also subject to the vagaries of these philosophical inconsistencies. After horrifying our children by showing them gruesome pictures of bleeding toddlers and babies on television, the community and the nation then proceeded to "comfort" them. In an effort to ensure that all of the children in our schools knew that someone "felt their pain" over the bombing, a number of things were done. School officials planted trees in front of schools and held ribbon-tying ceremonies in honor of the victims. Teddy bears, donated by a well-intentioned someone in another part of the country, were distributed. Compassionate gestures like this, truly kind-hearted, were scattered like grapeshot into this community. As with all such indirect, impersonal gifts, however, many missed their mark. At the elementary school my children attended last year, for some reason the third-grade students received teddy bears after the bombing. A year later, when all but the most directly affected schoolchildren had gotten over it, we reminded them by holding a moment of silence in the schools at 9:02 A.M. and discussing it all over again.

One of the sad results of the general institutionalization of American children from the age of six weeks up is that adults seem to have lost sight of the realities of childhood. Children are not comforted by planting trees and tying ribbons and receiving teddy bears from strangers and feeling guilty because little sister did not get one. A child is comforted by the presence of an adult who knows him and is truthful and compassionate and who, quite simply, is there.

There is also the matter of family honor and privacy. Since when should people halfway across the nation (or around the globe, for that matter) be silent staring parties to an individual's or a community's grief? Journalists who prey on grieving women around the world to get their scoop should be sent back to deliver papers, not write for them. Likewise demoted should be journalists who believe that their audience is too ignorant to notice when the grief they are reporting is a result not of the political or military crisis at hand, but of the woman's own internal contradictions. During the Gulf War, for example, nearly half of what was reported on the television news in the early days of the war concerned the plight of American military families containing two military members, rather than one, who were now both being mobilized and deployed to the front. Weeping women whined on television, "What will I do with my children?" Indeed.

The news media's attention to the distress of individuals tends also to obscure the larger issues that those who are brave enough to keep abreast of current events should be pondering. Why, for example, did the bombing take place on the anniversary of Waco? What kind of seething cultural and political forces does this point to under the surface of American society—or is it simply a random act of pathological violence without significance? What will be the implications for our society of raising an entire generation to believe that mass violence (whether a domestic terrorist act, a Bosnian war, or a Chechen rebellion) involves a crazed, evil, nasty party wreaking random, senseless destruction on lily-white innocent victims? And instead of "Why here?" and "Oh no, it can't be!" why aren't at least a few voices going beyond the arrogance of those responses and stating what we all know to be true: either there were specific, possibly preventable, reasons for this bombing or it was truly random and crazed, in which case Oklahoma City and Middle America are in no way insulated from such a roll of the dice.

Oklahoma City, for all its portrayal as a "town of the Heartland," is, like any other metropolitan area of a million people, a conglomerate of small local communities organized around neighborhoods, churches, schools, and places of work. Everyone who died at the Murrah Federal Building was a member of some community that cared for him, and the consolation expressed by that community would greatly comfort his surviving family and friends. Yet the media blitz, the mass memorials, and the nationwide sympathy campaigns had the ironic effect of making the experiences of these smaller, more intimate communities appear paltry and meaningless by comparison. The superficial and insignificant upstaged the profound and meaningful, simply because the former was large-scale and centralized and the latter was small-scale and local.

There have also been responses of the political and economic "gather ye roses while ye may" variety. Politicians have made appearances to show their compassion. President Clinton and Vice President Gore have come on separate occasions to demonstrate concern. The name of our Governor Frank Keating is now known nationwide, not because of his skills as a governor, but because tragedy happened on his watch. A coffee-table book was published within months of the bombing, and a relentless stream of books, events, songs, and television programs have filled the last year. The anniversary of the bombing saw a resurgence of economic interest in the event. Bumper stickers were duly produced for sale. Ribbon sales across town skyrocketed as merchants made or purchased ready-made memorial ribbons for their employees to wear on the anniversary. Of course, the trees planted in front of the schools needed fresh ribbons as well.

As the city for weeks prepared for the massive one-year anniversary memorial service, one could not help but be suspicious that bomb-mourning was threatening to degenerate into a state industry—a macabre, sentimental, yearly April Mardi Gras. Thankfully, it seems unlikely that the media, economic, and political interests will continue to dominate the public grief process in Oklahoma in the coming years. Since the one-year anniversary, talk of the bombing seems to have subsided. Perhaps Oklahomans have been honorably observing a one-year period of public mourning, much as a widow wears black for a year though she remembers her husband forever.

The personal responses to the Oklahoma City bombing are, of course, varied and endless. For those who lost loved ones, the grief will continue to take the form that fits their religious and philosophical outlook on life. No amount of memorial services and news reports will affect or alter this. As individual residents of Oklahoma City continue to live in the wake of this tragedy in our midst, the best things to be done are to comfort the ones we know personally who lost a loved one and to go on with the necessities of our own daily life and inner convictions. No man knows the hour of his own death.

Susan Lanier Anderson writes from Edmond, Oklahoma.

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Letter From Chicago

by David A. Gorak

Real *Daily News*

Those who work for what today pass as newspapers often deserve the criticism directed at them for their lack of objectivity, sloppy reporting, and elitism. Having long abandoned the singular mission of informing their readers so that they may be able to make informed decisions about complex issues, these papers have degenerated into nothing more than corporate profit centers and lapdogs for many special interest groups.

In all fairness, however, it must be said that the greed and pandering may not be the only forces at work within the industry. Perhaps a once noble industry is only responding to our growing demand to be entertained rather than informed. How else can we explain the proliferation of vacuous television "news magazines," talk shows, celebrity interviews, and anything else that requires little or no intellectual effort?

There was a time when accurate, straightforward news was the norm, grammar was emphasized, and reporters were all too willing to make that "one last call." I was reminded of all that once again—of how good it was, how exciting it was—when I joined former colleagues at the 17th annual *Chicago Daily News* reunion held in June at Chicago's legendary Billy Goat Tavern & Grill.

A dimly lit place on lower Michigan Avenue that reeks of cooking grease and beer, the Goat once was a favorite gathering place for the legends of Chicago journalism, and its walls are covered with their photographs. And thanks to the late actor/comedian John Belushi and his wake crew during the early years of *Saturday Night Live*, even the most reclusive among us knows that "Chiz-burger! Chiz-burger!" is a daily refrain echoed by the Goat's short-order cooks.

Today, however, the place is frequented mostly by marketing, p.r., and MBA types whose primary goals in life are instant gratification and a quick buck. Not one of these "new communicators" could probably tell you the difference between hot type and a hot tub. Known as a "writers' paper," the 102-year-old *News* died in March 1978 with 15 Pulitzer Prizes to its credit. Beginning in the late 1960's, this great newspaper suffered the indignity of repeated style changes in hopes of satisfying a new generation of readers who now preferred television news to the written word. Many of us have seen the routine before: profits begin to slip and in come the "consultants," to urge switching to new type faces, harebrained features, and incorporating, oh yes, plenty of pictures.

But it was too late, and all that was left for then publisher Marshall Field, who knew as much about the business as I know about piloting the Space Shuttle, was to pull the plug during a little speech he delivered while standing on someone's desk.

I joined the *News* as a copyboy when I was 17 and right out of high school. It was a time when an editor's only responsibility was to get the very best from his reporters and publish a paper that gave its readers their money's worth. These editors cared deeply about quality and read nearly every column of the city's other newspapers that worked diligently to scoop everyone else. God help the reporter who missed a fact that made us look as though we had been asleep at the switch.

On those occasional Friday night shifts, my job included two trips in a *News* circulation truck to a newsstand several blocks away to pick up several copies of the competitors' "rags," which our editors jumped on and pored over like a kid attacking his presents on Christmas morning. In the winter, speeding along Madison Street in that truck with both doors open was just plain cold; in the summer, it was great. Those early-morning rides often included watching the dawn break over the city or, on a more somber note, the fire department as it dragged the Chicago River for the body of some poor wino who staggered off a loading dock, or that of someone who just decided that enough was enough.

It was also a time when columnist Mike Royko was just another nightside reporter, and nobody really got bent out of shape if you drank your lunch now and then, provided that you didn't miss a deadline. But most of all, it was time for people like the late writer Eddie Eulenberg and copy editor Angelo "Angie" Biondo.

Eddie, a large, pleasant man who always had a nice word for everyone, is credited with coining the phrase that editors used to warn young reporters about taking what they hear at face value: "If your mother says she loves you, make her prove it." (He later said that was wrong; what he really said was, ". . . kick her in the knee and make her prove it.") Angie worked in the Sports Department and, like Eddie, never was too busy to stop by the copyboy's bench to say hello or ask if we might want a couple of tickets to a baseball game.

During the reunion at the Goat, Angie came over to where I was standing, stuck out his hand, and asked if I remembered him. He seemed pleased that I did and said, "My eyes aren't so good anymore, but I recognized you right away."

I doubt that the caliber of people with whom I worked will ever again be given leadership roles in tomorrow's city rooms, because their kind are out of place in a society that has become self-absorbed and shortsighted. So here's to the Eddie Eulenbergs and Angie Biondos and the rest of those wonderful *Daily News* people, ordinary people who often did extraordinary things that resulted in a product worth far more than what it sold for on the newsstand.

David A. Gorak writes from Lombard, Illinois.

LIBERAL ARTS

THE LAUGHTER POLICE

"Thomas Grosse, the Madison police officer faulted for laughing when another officer allegedly urinated in a homeless man's whiskey bottle, has been referred to the Deferred Prosecution Program. Grosse was charged with disorderly conduct. Through the program, he will likely perform community service and the charge will be dismissed, said his lawyer Lester Pines."

—*from the* Wisconsin State Journal, *September* 28.

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FILM

The New South

by Michael Washburn

A Time to Kill

Produced by Arnon Milchan, Michael Nathanson, Hunt Lowry, and John Grisham
Directed by Joel Schumacher
Based on a novel by John Grisham
Screenplay by Akiva Goldsman
Released by Warner Brothers

A Time to Kill, Joel Schumacher's new film about race relations in the South, has drawn plaudits from many critics. Stanley Kauffmann, writing in the *New Republic*, hails the return of "the old-fashioned Hollywood liberal film." While this movie has much in common with earlier anti-South epics—*Mississippi Burning* comes to mind—it does not depict the familiar battle between white bigots and angry blacks assisted by Northern civil rights workers and federal agents. Instead, Schumacher's film puts a contemporary liberal spin on the great divide Faulkner depicted, in his novels about the Sartoris family, between the emerging, urbanized New South and the backward Old South.

The movie opens with shots of a pair of ugly, sweaty hillbillies tearing around Catron County, Mississippi, in—what else?—a pickup truck, decorated with a Confederate flag decal. After yelling threats and hurling a whiskey bottle at some young blacks, the two men stop to buy beer at a black grocery store. On the way back, they spot the 10-year-old daughter of Carl Lee Haley, a well-liked black who works in the lumberyard. After hurling a beer can—one of their favorite pastimes, apparently—and knocking the young girl down, the two men stop and proceed to rape her, beat her senseless, urinate on her, and toss her violated body into a river.

After killing the two bumpkins on their way to trial—and crippling a police officer in the process—Carl Lee Haley seeks the help of Jake Brigantz, a rising young lawyer and the disciple of a renowned former civil rights attorney. Brigantz (played with no charisma by Matthew McConaughey) is a perfect white-collar New Southerner: polished, enlightened, articulate, suburban, liberal. With his progressive politics and virtually accentless speech, he stands in sharp contrast to the assorted rednecks, repressed Puritans, and morons who make up most of Catron County's citizenry. Although Carl Lee cannot offer him more than chicken feed for his troubles, Jake takes on the case in the hope of making a political and moral statement. Speaking before the television cameras outside the county courthouse, Jake states his wish to show that in the New South it is possible for a black man to get a fair trial and receive justice, that justice in the South is now colorblind. Enlightenment and rationality will win out over bigotry and stupidity; the New South will prevail over the Old South.

The brother of one of the ventilated rednecks, played by Kiefer Sutherland, doesn't see it that way. Somewhat more clean-cut than his relative, but otherwise just as backward, he decides to launch a vigilante campaign of his own, but he doesn't know where to turn for help. He is convinced, like everyone else, that the Ku Klux Klan has more or less vanished from Catron County, until a local Grand Wizard informs him that the Klan is still around—in fact, it is "always there, beneath the surface" of Southern society. The Klan official complains that today the blacks have everyone—even the federal government—on their side, avowing that the Klan represents the last hope of white people. With the help of some local Klansmen, Sutherland tries several times to kill Jake and his family, but is foiled each time by a mole inside the organization who tips off the police (though for some mysterious reason he waits until literally the last second to do so).

An interesting touch is the portrayal of the NAACP's involvement in Carl Lee's case. The minister of a local black congregation receives a visit from an unctuous NAACP official who claims to have "marched with Dr. King" during the heyday of the civil rights era. In the official's view, Jake Brigantz is "out of touch" with the needs of the community, and must be replaced by an NAACP-appointed lawyer. He would therefore like the minister to take collections from his congregation—setting aside a modest administrative fee, of course—in order to pay for a new attorney. The replacement later turns out to be the notorious head of a legal "death squad" which intentionally loses the cases of accused blacks in order to make martyrs of them. When Carl Lee declines to accept his "help," the NAACP official loudly denounces him for enlisting a "cracker" in his struggle for freedom. (Not so long ago the black demagogue turned up only rarely in films of limited commercial appeal, like the Al Sharpton-lookalike Reverend Bacon in *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. But today, even in a "Hollywood liberal film," the hypocritical professional Negro seems to have become an Established Character whom it is acceptable to mock.)

But the culprits in this film are ordinary Southerners—or the Klansmen and bigots who act on what is darkest in the Southern psyche. Most of the whites are unsympathetic to Carl Lee—the street outside the courthouse is the site of tense and, in one scene, horrifically violent confrontations between black supporters and men dressed in sheets. The jury, secretly discussing the case over dinner, prematurely finds Carl Lee guilty of murder. Jake does finally win the case, but only through a predictable psychological trick—giving a lengthy, lurid account of the rape of poor Tanya Haley, and then telling the jury to imagine that the girl whose bloody, violated body drifts down the river has a white face.

In the entire two-and-a-half hour film, there is only one reference to an interracial crime other than Tanya's rape. Before carrying out the revenge killings, Carl Lee asks Jake about the verdict in a case in another county in which "four white boys" raped a black girl. Upon learning that they were acquitted, he decides that the only course left to him is to take the law into his own hands. Fair enough. Of course, if we accept this as a rationale for murder, then whites would be justified in slaughtering thousands of black rapists every year. The white vic-

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tim so luridly described in the closing scene is in fact too commonplace to be very shocking.

To Hollywood the South is no longer the irredeemable backwater of *Mississippi Burning*, but a place like South Africa, which is successfully overturning its old order and shedding its evil heritage. But the New South is admirable only insofar as it has ceased to be Southern. Jake Brigantz is a Southerner only by an accident of geography; he could just as well live in New York, Chicago, or L.A. The effeminate Horace Benbow may outlive the violent, rebellious Bayard Sartoris, but only by turning away forever from his customs and heritage.

Michael Washburn is the assistant editor of Chronicles.

REGIONALISM

The Good Kennedys

by Michael Hill

The Kennedys are an American institution. No, not the Massachusetts rabble, but the Louisiana Kennedys, James Ronald (of Mandeville) and Walter Donald (of Simsboro), self-described "Scotch-Irish crackers" and authors of *The South Was Right!* and *Why Not Freedom! America's Revolt Against Big Government*, both available from Pelican Publishing in Gretna, Louisiana (phone number: 1-800-843-1724).

Born in 1948 in the piney-woods of Copiah County, Mississippi, the Kennedy twins grew up in a relatively poor, but stable, Christian family. As young children, they were taken to the grave of their great-grandfather, John Wesley Kennedy, and learned of his trials as a Confederate soldier serving in Company F of the 38th Mississippi Volunteer Infantry. This blood connection to the past was strengthened by an unreconstructed grade school teacher who would put down her books and tell them stories about The War for Southern Independence passed on by her own great-grandmother.

As teenagers in the 1960's, the Kennedys came to regard the defense of the South from its detractors as a "spiritual duty." When the civil rights activists stepped up their attacks on Southern traditions, especially states' rights, James and Walter volunteered to serve Mississippi gubernatorial candidate Ross Barnett and the "unpledged electors" movement. Both cast their first vote in a national election for Democratic presidential candidate George Wallace in 1968. But, as Walter explains, "We had no party commitment. Instead, we were committed to a philosophy of limited government. We considered ourselves Jeffersonian republicans, and had no sympathy for the 'false republicanism' of Abraham Lincoln and his party successors."

As Lyndon Johnson and the civil rights movement continued to dismantle the Constitution, the Kennedys contemplated a book project to defend the founding principles of the Old American Republic. Understanding that the ideas behind the founding were essentially Southern and that their Confederate ancestors had fought to preserve the legacy of Washington, Jefferson, and Madison, they began researching *The South Was Right!* James remembers: "We both had jobs and neither one of us considered ourselves writers. This was a labor of passion." For the next two decades, they read and studied Southern history, literature, and political thought. Along the way, both men became convinced that a state has the right to secede if its interests are best served by that course, an issue they believe was not settled at Appomattox. The tyranny of busing and quotas and the sacrifice of our men to imperial politics during the Vietnam War opened the Kennedys' eyes to the fact that the United States government was an out-of-control criminal enterprise that could be stopped only by a reassertion of the principles of states' rights, nullification, and even secession.

The South Was Right! (the second edition especially) has had a tremendous impact on its 40,000 or so buyers. Dr. Milburn Calhoun, head of Pelican Publishers, has tirelessly promoted the book, and the Kennedys themselves have spent countless hours at book-signings and on radio talk shows across the country. Walter notes that about "90 percent of callers agree with our positions." He tells of a youthful naysayer who called into a Newport News, Virginia, station to announce that secession was unconstitutional because his college professors told him so. At that point, Mr. Kennedy wagered $1,000 that the unlettered young Unionist could not find the constitutional provision forbidding secession. After frantically thumbing through the founding document, the gentleman hung up the phone in despair—a typical reaction. As James says of those who cannot or will not face the truth about the rectitude of the Southern cause: "A hit dog hollers."

The success of the Kennedys' first book has contributed significantly to a renewed interest in the South's cultural and political heritage. According to James, the most frequently asked question from their readers is, "Now that we know the lies and distortions spread about our Southern heritage, how can we organize to come to its defense?" By mid-1994, the Kennedys could give an answer. They both were instrumental in forming the Southern League, a rapidly growing organization dedicated to advancing the cultural, social, economic, and political well-being and independence of traditional Southerners. Reflecting on the ongoing campaign of cultural genocide against the South and America's descent into Third World barbarism, Walter remarks: "If the Union can't be saved, then we must and will save ourselves."

If thousands of Southerners are now comfortable in defending their heritage and culture, much of the credit must go to James and Walter Kennedy. But they are tireless and will not stop here. Their second book, *Why Not Freedom! America's Revolt Against Big Government*, published in late 1995, attempts to reach a much wider audience. Its message is that the South's state sovereignty solution to the tyranny of "consolidated government" is usable by the people of all the states. Like growing numbers of Southerners and other Americans, the Kennedys are aware that the problem is not only "liberal Democrats," but a Democrat-Republican ruling class—the Clinton-Dole axis—that is determined to destroy regional communities and replace them with a lifeless national (even global) uniformity based on mass "culture" and mass consumption.

That the Louisiana Kennedys fit comfortably into the Southern paleoconservative camp results from their ties to those they claim as intellectual heroes: Jefferson, Calhoun, Randolph of Roanoke, William Rawle, R.L. Dabney, Andrew N. Lytle, Donald Davidson,

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Richard M. Weaver, M.E. Bradford, Clyde Wilson, and Grady McWhiney, among others. They believe that if there is any hope of restoring ordered liberty and self-government, it will spring from this intellectual tradition. What seems to them equally evident is that the renewal of American civilization will not emerge from the Contract With America or from any half-measure cooked up inside the Beltway. Our forefathers knew that good government worked its way up from the household through local communities and churches, the states, and finally, and only as a last resort, to Washington, D.C. They also understand that when government ceases to serve households and the intermediate associations that shield them from centralized power, it is up to the people themselves to put things right. By helping to reopen the debate over the principles our imperial rulers hoped were long dead—states' rights, nullification, and secession—James R. and Walter D. Kennedy have struck a decisive blow at the very heart of the American Empire. Doubtless it will not be the last from these gentlemen.

Michael Hill is a historian and president of the Southern League.

SCIENCE

Crime Genes and Other Delusions

by Kevin Lamb

In his closing argument before jurors in the O.J. Simpson murder trial, Deputy District Attorney Christopher A. Darden described Simpson as being "out of control" when he allegedly killed his former wife and Ronald Goldman. Mr. Darden pointed to a series of events in the hours before the brutal killings that, having ignited the short fuse of Mr. Simpson's unstable temperament, turned a "homicidal fit" into a "rage killing."

The renewed concerns over a recent University of Maryland conference on "The Meaning and Significance of Research on Genetics and Criminal Behavior," cast new light on Mr. Darden's metaphor. What ignites and fuels this short burning fuse? One's environment or genes? Is there a predisposition toward impulsive violence or is violent crime simply a matter of poverty and oppression?

Sociologists like Dorothy Nelkin argue that "social factors" generate violent crime, although a growing amount of evidence shows that violent behavior stems from several interacting factors—both social and biological. Sometimes referred to as "criminogenetic traits," the risk factors of age, gender, race, personality, intelligence, temperament, childhood development, peer influence, and socioeconomic status are solid and persistent correlates of crime.

By focusing upon social forces alone, critics continue to ignore other important factors that contribute to violent crime. The line of reasoning that indicts "society" for the conduct of violent predators is a fallacy of early 20th-century behaviorism, namely that the human mind is like a blank slate, that all human behavior is determined by social conditioning.

Critics also maintain that no one has identified a gene for "crime." This is simply a red herring. Genes influence behavior indirectly. As Thomas Bouchard, director of the Minnesota Twin Studies Project, points out, genetic influences on behavior are mainly distal rather than proximate. Recent findings from twin and adoption studies confirm this. To contend that no "crime gene" exists does not discredit behavior genetic research, not to mention the fact that the discovery of a "crime gene" would astonish the scientific community.

Advancements in behavioral genetics over the past 20 years have changed the way researchers view the effects of heredity and environment on behavioral development. Once thought of as nature *versus* nurture, hereditary and environmental influences are no longer viewed as rivals but interacting forces, or quite simply nature *via* nurture. The outcome of this interaction takes the form of individual differences in personality traits and characteristics, which produces both social and antisocial behavior.

It is not enough for critics to explain away crime as merely the product of social conditions. They must clarify *how* these conditions produce violent behavior, *why* biological factors are irrelevant, and *why* behavior genetic research is unable to determine the "root causes" of crime. Arguably the most comprehensive study of "root causes" to date, a leading panel of experts under the auspices of the National Research Council found that both social and biological factors influence violent crime.

One of the findings corroborated by behavioral scientists (one which sociologists are reluctant to acknowledge) is that the demise of the traditional family environment acts as a catalyst for juvenile delinquency. As David Lykken, a professor of psychology at the University of Minnesota, points out in his recent study of antisocial personalities, dysfunctional parenting plays a major role in violent crime. The lack of moral guidance, when combined with individual differences in personality and temperament, explains delinquent behavior better than economic status alone.

Although a disproportionate number of violent offenders are disadvantaged, not all disadvantaged people are criminals. What Columbia University psychiatrist David Abrahamsen noted 50 years ago remains valid today, that "so-called 'poor-environment' cannot be considered a sufficient explanation for criminal behavior, because a number of law-abiding citizens have lived and grown up under unfavorable conditions. A poor environment can only be regarded as causative insofar as it is combined with a certain disposition in the individual making latent criminal tendencies manifest." By the same token, a similar set of circumstances may not always yield identical results. Anyone who unknowingly touches a hot stove will flinch in pain, but the difference between someone who immediately treats a blistered hand or someone who violently strikes a spouse for leaving the stove on may have as much to do with one's predisposition as with sheer circumstance.

The same holds true for understanding the "root causes" of crime. Often, these so-called "root causes" reflect inaccurate assumptions about violent crime, such as that "society" is somehow responsible for crime because of failed social welfare policies. As Dwight Ingle once put it, lack of water is not the cause of fire. Individual differences in personality, intelligence, and temperament explain violent behavior more comprehensively than inadequate sociological theories.

Moreover, survey data presented by Lee Ellis, a professor of sociology at Minot State University, reveal that soci-

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ologists often view social problems through an ideological prism. Rutgers University sociologist Irving Louis Horowitz argues that sociologists promote outdated and questionable theories of crime. A once promising academic discipline, the demise of sociology exemplifies the toll of political correctness.

Most social critics will never recognize the value of behavior genetic research for the simple reason that it challenges the deeply held egalitarian beliefs of social scientists. When scholars begin to claim that too much is made over the "validity of research data" rather than "real issues," scientific research becomes hostage to the political agendas of social activists. By opposing a legitimate field of scientific study, ideologically driven scholars undermine not only their own work but the credibility of the behavioral sciences as well.

The message this sends is that, when it comes to examining socially sensitive issues, ignorance is better than knowledge. Such a narrow-minded view should concern anyone who values accuracy and academic integrity in the pursuit of scientific research.

Kevin Lamb is an assistant librarian for Newsweek.

THEATER

One Flea Spare & Other New Plays

by Katherine Dalton

Actors Theatre of Louisville started its new play festival 20 years ago—that's a long life in the American theater, and the Humana Festival of New American Plays achieved institution status several seasons back. Unfortunately, the festival is now a little like a fully endowed congregation that no longer has to look to itself to underwrite its annual operating budget. The altar flowers are beautiful, but the spirit is wanting.

There were two good full-length plays this year and some entertaining shorts, and ATL deserves credit for regularly producing new work. Most theaters cannot, or think they cannot, afford to. But there is more good work out there than ATL is finding, and I am convinced a festival that has been so-so in recent years could be so much better. Part of the problem may be in the way the festival is organized. ATL's practice now is to commission plays from established (or at least working) playwrights, and well-known journalists or novelists. That sounds like a good idea, and sometimes works, but more often it does not. This year, for example, the biggest names wrote the shortest plays, some of them nice but sketches at best. Also this year, as has happened before, one of the best plays (*One Flea Spare*) was originally produced elsewhere, which means ATL cannot take the credit for fostering it.

Every season I wish once again that ATL would return to its original practice of holding an open contest—keeping some commissions, but spending some of the Humana grant to hire a legion of part-time readers to cull the large number of plays the theater would surely receive. I am convinced that out of this gargantuan slush pile would come a much stronger festival. Plus ATL would once again discover new playwrights—something the theater cannot really claim anymore, despite all its good work, its well-earned prestige, and all the hours and sweat its staff put into producing a dozen plays at once.

One of the best pieces this year was by Prospect, Kentucky, native Naomi Wallace. I wish it had not taken several London productions for anyone in the States to take interest in her work, but never mind. *One Flea Spare* is set in England in 1665 during the plague. A child and a seaman break into a wealthy merchant couple's house, forcing them all to live together for a month under quarantine. The husband patronizes the sailor and puts him to work, scrubbing the boards with vinegar against infection, while the wife (played by the excellent Peggy Cowles) falls in love with him. The fey child, a servant girl masquerading as her dead master's dead daughter, focuses on surviving.

It is an ugly, sexual story about class and death, with a young actor playing (to my discomfort) a child that knows too much too early. But the play is redeemed by Ms. Wallace's skill. She is a powerful writer with beautiful if sometimes terrifying imagery, who has written a good play with *One Flea Spare* and may someday write a great one.

The festival's other full-length success was by Joan Ackermann, a former *Sports Illustrated* writer who is now co-artistic director of the Mixed Company theater in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. *The Batting Cage* concerns sisters Julianna and Wilson, who have come to St. Augustine to spread the ashes of their third sister, and to grieve in their very different ways. Ackermann has a reporter's eye for ridiculous detail and has a good track record of quirky comedies (including *Zara Spook and Other Lures*, set at a bass 'n' gal tournament). Unlike too many comic writers, Ackermann is funny, and this play transcends her usual hilarity with a poignancy and seriousness that is very nicely done. Veanne Cox was particularly good as the shopaholic divorcee Julianna, and so was ATL apprentice Justin Hagan, as the hotel room-service waiter (with a barnacle growing in his ear) who befriends her.

Of the shorter pieces, the best included *What I Meant Was*, by *Prelude to a Kiss* author Craig Lucas. This play is a Thanksgiving dinner fantasy conversation in which each member of a dysfunctional family actually says what he thinks. John Patrick Shanley (best known for his screenplays *Moonstruck* and *Joe Versus the Volcano*) had two one-acts about love and relationships that were slight, but which showed his nice ear for conversation.

There were also two plays I could respect if not like: *Jack and Jill* by the pseudonymous Jane Martin (who is probably ATL producing director Jon Jory and/or friends and relatives), and an Anne Bogart-and-company created piece called *Going, Going, Gone*. Martin's play traces a very modern couple's troubled relationship over time, and while the piece is well constructed and was skillfully set in ATL's round Bingham Theater, it is maddening to watch. The two characters are so annoying that it's impossible to care what happens to them.

Going, Going, Gone is not a play, but a created piece using various "texts" on quantum physics. Anne Bogart, co-director of the Saratoga International Theater Institute, has directed some of my favorite and least favorite theater pieces—among the former the ATL production of Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine*, which was superb.

Ms. Bogart demands that her actors learn great physical control, and that their body language always convey some-

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thing other than a literal reading of a line—either adding to or in some cases undercutting their spoken words. She is not a realist; she thinks art should explode life and is always dragging subtext and subconscious out for an airing. She is a very bright woman and fun to hear lecture, and certainly her plays shake a person up. But in this case the "story" of two couples, told by characters who both argued about and personified the new and old physics, entailed a lot of complicated conversation that led not to enlightenment but only, in the end, to wife-swapping. As my friend Tom likes to say, sex belongs in the home. Some censorship might do the extremely talented Ms. Bogart a world of good.

Tony Kushner, whose *Angels in America* was an enormous critical success, contributed the 20-minute *Reverse Transcription*, a spoof of this year's Humana playwrights. It was a funny little bubble of a play with inside jokes. Another commissioned celebrity, New York newspaperman Jimmy Breslin, wrote a ploddingly ironical mini-play about Newt Gingrich's divorce, which made me feel that even cads deserve to be more wittily skewered on stage. *Contract with Jackie* was redeemed only by the acting of Divina Cook, who deserves a special award for doing her best to breathe life into two of the festival's flops—the other being Guillermo Reyes' Latin soap opera *Chilean Holiday*. Also disappointing was David Henry Hwang's short play on his usual subject (he is the author of *M. Butterfly*), white guilt and Asian/Caucasian relations. In it a Chinese-American street fiddler in New York berates a white yokel from Wisconsin, who ends up being the adopted son of Chinese parents. If Hwang's argument is that you can choose your culture, I am not buying it.

Finally, last and least, came Elizabeth Dewberry's *Flesh and Blood*. Ms. Dewberry has a perfect résumé: a B.A. from Vanderbilt and a Ph.D. from Emory, two novels published by Doubleday, a few state art council grants, and a teaching stint at Bread Loaf. Yet *Flesh and Blood* is one of the worst plays I have ever seen in my life. Her drama, which was not helped by its dispirited cast, begins as a trite family-betrayal story and ends with little sister taking off her shirt and being stabbed to death (curtain!). When I saw the play it was performed without an intermission, and I understood: we'd have fled if given the chance.

Oddly enough, the best performance of all was the free one given by ATL's 20 apprentices, young actors who spend a year at the theater providing long hours of free labor in return for classes and a chance to perform in ATL productions. The group performed monologues staged by apprentice company director Jennifer Hubbard. While some performers were stronger than others, the evening as a whole was terrific, the transitions from piece to piece were wonderfully done, and everyone worked together as a company—something I cannot say of any other festival production. In honor of the Humana Festival's 20th anniversary, all monologues were taken from previous festival plays, and again and again I was struck by how strong some of the early work was—for example Larry Larson and Levi Lee's satire *Some Things You Need to Know Before the World Ends (A Final Evening With the Illuminati)*, in which apprentice Sean McNall was hilarious.

Something tells me writers like Larson and Lee have highly imperfect résumés. They are the kind of people who come out of the woodwork (or the slush pile). It is significant that the best night of the 1996 Humana Festival was acted for free with older work; the festival is calling out for a change. But in a way, that night was heartening for anyone who cares about ATL. It showed that the theater has a strong past to draw on, and for the future a pool of very good young actors.

Katherine Dalton is a writer, editor, and critic in Louisville, Kentucky.

ARCHITECTURE

Rockefeller Center

by R.T. Valentine

On a rainy July afternoon I stood on the Promenade at Rockefeller Plaza and beheld Prometheus unbound. There he was, his golden self sprawled against the wall of the erstwhile skating rink (in summer it is transformed into an outdoor cafe), holding the flame in his right hand, his gift to mankind. Above him is a most fitting inscription provided by Aeschylus: "Prometheus, teacher in every art, brought the fire that hath proved to mortals a means to mighty ends."

Suddenly, a deranged man (or prophet) walked by, muttering how Prometheus was really Lucifer in shining disguise—and mine eyes beheld a glory which quickly faded. Golden Prometheus began to look sinister, with a mocking expression upon his beautiful face, which put me in mind of the gilded figures so often seen in the degenerate, cruel, and opulent fetes associated with the *ancien régime* during the so-called Age of Reason. The fire in his hand was Reason—the cynical, critical, destructive sort—and he was about to bestow it upon mankind, so men could be as gods. It was the advent of a perverted Pentecost, with a fiery orb plucked and hurled from the Tree of Knowledge and Life.

Appropriately enough, Prometheus and a host of other seemingly benevolent characters adorn the walls of the buildings and structures comprising Rockefeller Center, a site familiar to most Americans and tourists at large. It is no mere coincidence that this plaza happens to house the offices and studios of one of the major broadcasting networks, the National Broadcasting Company, whose very name brings to mind the "nationalization" of other institutions during the Age of Dictators.

The buildings in the plaza have a distinct totalitarian flavor about them as well. They are built of solid concrete with a dull-gray hue, giving an Atlantic Wall appearance. The main building, which rises above the rest, is the most prominent of the group and resembles one of the massive flak towers constructed in Berlin during World War II to provide shelter from the destructive air raids. It has a distinct Art Deco, New Age look (like many of the new, sinister structures in Atlanta or the infamous "Batman" building in Nashville, to name but a few); at any moment, I expected to see Skeletor himself emerge from this tower of darkness, to boast of his prowess before the good guy He-man (or perhaps even Buck Rogers). If not Skeletor, then why not such real-life characters as Hitler, Stalin, or Mussolini—or even Prometheus?

Unfortunately, evil rarely assumes such obvious, outward forms. As so aptly illustrated by C.S. Lewis in the preface to *The Screwtape Letters*, it resides within and "is conceived and ordered

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(moved, seconded, carried and minuted) in clean, carpeted, warmed, and well-lighted offices, by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voice."

To mask this subtlety, heroic-looking figures adorn several of the buildings comprising the plaza. In their Art Deco forms, with square features and a plethora of muscles, they represent either gods or goddesses, or the common man; the implication being that perhaps they are both one and the same—we are as gods.

On one building we see them as the guardians of the portal. Over the main entrance stand two muscular he-men, the one on the left grasping a sledgehammer facing another on the right who wields a sickle (note where they stand). The guardians of the gate are the proletarian and the farmer, laborers now united and situated so as to protect the straight and narrow way to eternal life within the Soviet paradise. Thus is manifested the proletarianization of society, a popular trend culminating in a golden era during the 1930's, when, incidentally, Rockefeller Center was constructed.

As an example of how serious this trend had become, one only needs to view the statue of General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson atop Henry House Hill on the Manassas battlefield in Virginia. Here, "Old Blue Light" himself is square-featured and so abounding in muscles that he seems about ready to burst out of his uniform. "Old Tom Fool" had been transformed into a superman, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound (even those in Rockefeller Center), faster than the speeding bullets fired at his Virginians, and more powerful than the locomotives which brought them there. The pious and modest Jackson, who stood like a stone wall at First Manassas and thus encouraged others to rally around him, would hardly have recognized himself in such a light, as a superman of the people. It comes as no surprise that this statue of Stonewall was sculpted and cast in New York City, then dispatched to the battlefield park, during the 1930's.

Those who prefer the Cult of Reason would naturally be encouraged by the inscription over the entrance of the main building in Rockefeller Center: "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy time." To give sanction to this creed, Zeus in his muscular form presides over the inscription, the law-giver who bestows wisdom upon mankind, in this case through the medium of two lesser deities who bear it directly to mortals. The lesser gods on either side of the inscription assume the standard muscular forms; the one at the right hand of Zeus is a typical he-man god, while the other at this left is a voluptuous she-man goddess. They symbolize the absolute equality of the sexes in this totalitarian Olympus, their status sanctified and ordained by a benevolent supreme being. By extension, both sets of mortals have the ability to perform the same tasks, regardless of their true capabilities, since these words of wisdom and knowledge from on high are now made flesh. No ribs are missing here.

For those who might be intimidated by this pantheon of musclebound messiahs, another building has a more comfortable array of feminine figures carrying vases of water (living water, no doubt), in the most blissful and happy state imaginable. Upon closer inspection, they turn out to be boys, similar to the types seen on ancient Greek pottery, yet these perform the tasks assigned to women and slaves in most ancient civilizations. The wall of yet another building has a frieze of figures resembling a pictograph found within an ancient Egyptian pyramid; some of these laborers are carrying vases of water as well. Happy servants all, the true stability of the people in a new-ordered society.

For the entertainment of these contented servants (ostensibly to distract their minds from their true condition), still another building contains the ground-level studios where such programs as the *Today Show* are brought to the people, albeit graciously, at their own level. Great icons of Katie and Bryant adorn its wall, although a Plexiglas veil separates the worshippers from the high priests within. The faithful behind the barriers rise early in the morning (braving the most hostile elements at times) to join the nation in paying homage to the *Today Show*. The media gods often emerge from their studio-temple to bestow a measure of grace upon the crowd outside; they speak to them, anoint them, and at times even permit them to address the nation. Then the grateful assemblage beholds as the gods ascend back into their studio, because as we all know, the show must go on.

And quite a spectacle it is. Later, after these devotions had long ceased, I walked over to the studio and peered through the Plexiglas window. The temple was a fraud and not what it appeared to be on television. It looked cheap. The furniture is so modest that one might have thought it came from an estate sale; a corrugated metal bookshelf houses an array of books which might easily have been bought at a rummage sale; the photographs in the background of the interview living rooms, which depict the fairest scenes in nature, are mere plastic panels of the type sold in Wal-Mart. And to think, all this time, I and the nation stood in awe of this studio brought to our level and the larger-than-life figures within.

All of these subtle and not-so-subtle messages are the real voices of the media mouthpiece which herald the arrival of the New World Order. They are the living symbols of a real presence where worldly knowledge is praised unceasingly and the accomplishments and refinements of Western Christian civilization are continually distorted by merciless, blaring propaganda. All of this has been happily subsidized by the managerial elites who serve at the Altar of Reason, determine church policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, and sing the praises of Prometheus, who has ironically deceived the deceivers. That is why he just sprawls there, shining and smiling.

Prometheus has so blinded the world that his true nature cannot be seen in the light (which would normally dispel him), even when the sun is shining. The multitudes who flock to Rockefeller Center cannot see his true nature on the fairest of days because they are busy admiring the awe-inspiring temples in the complex, places he calls home. It takes the gloom of adversity, manifested by a rainy day, to look within ourselves first, so that we might see Prometheus laughing at us in our pride and folly. When our eyes are thus opened, we will know true wisdom and knowledge, and see that Prometheus, so godlike, is chained to a rock for all eternity for calling himself God. But like the dragon in the Book of Revelation, he has been let loose to breathe the flames of wisdom and knowledge, deceive the multitudes, and bring us all down into the lake of fire with him.

R.T. Valentine is a graduate student at the University of South Carolina.

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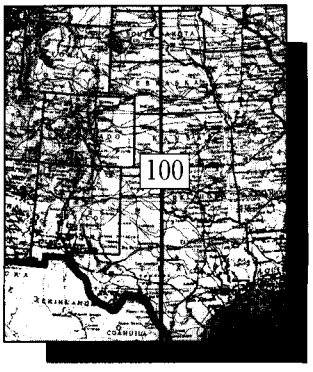
The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

In Mexico

The man and the bull stood facing one another across the yellow sand midway between the center of the ring and the barrera. The bull was smaller and less ferocious than the big fighting bulls; the man was young, not out of his teens, and instead of the matador's costume of embroidered silk he wore a suit of tight-fitting tan cloth, and under it a stiff white shirt. He was a novillero facing his first bull, and although he was doing better with it than the novillero of the Sunday before had done with his, still he was making some terrible mistakes, turning his back at a 45 degree angle to the bull as he walked away from a series of incomplete passes. His death, if it happened, would be witnessed by a handful of spectators—family, friends; spectators at the sorteo which had preceded the professional fight scheduled to commence at 6:30 that evening; employees of the Plaza de Toros Monumental—and it would probably not be written up in the *Diario de Juárez* the next day.

At a quarter past one, with the sun just past the overhead, the temperature approached 100 degrees. Many of the women sitting on the concrete benches were under umbrellas, while Jim Rauen and I stood sweating in our straw hats against one of the iron fences anchored right and left of the entry to the arena. It was warm to be standing out in the September sun of Mexico, too warm to be fighting a bull, and far too warm to be doing it encased in a suit that looked as if it had been made for the hero of a 19th-century romantic opera. The novillero's assistants were dressed as uncomfortably as he, and they too made bad mistakes. The fight proceeded by fits and starts, and at last the novillero took up the muleta. His incomplete motions arrested the bull prematurely, causing him to try to hook the man with his horn as he passed. This happened several times before the boy, in an attempt at imitating the nonchalance of the matador, turned his back on the bull to look up to the spectators. The muleta fell in the sand as the bull, charging, caught him in the seat of the pants and lifted him between the wide-set points of the horns. He



landed ahead of himself in a sitting position as the assistants ran in flapping their capes to draw the bull off and sprinted behind the burladero, from which he emerged limping with a tear in the leg of his tan suit, determined to make the kill. He killed poorly, but at least he was not killed himself and he killed better than last week's novillero had. "That kid is going to be sore for the next month," Jim said. Around us the women were getting up from the concrete and folding their umbrellas. "Let's walk over to Paco and have lunch."

It was good to be back in irreducible Mexico, which resists sentimentality as strongly as the United States embraces it, and where Mexicans are not a "minority group" but simply real people. In fact, it is worth becoming a member of a minority group yourself to be here. Except you are never treated as such in Mexico. Instead you are regarded as either a target of malfeasance, from shortchanging by shopkeepers and taxi drivers to murder at the hands of banditos and the federales, and everything in between; or, as is far more likely, a curious but for the most part welcome guest, by generous hosts. If it were not for a government even more awful than our own, I would probably be a resident alien down here now, having willingly surrendered my legitimate place at the Greatest Trough On Earth to the next illegal paisano arrived in search of the Good Life as exemplified by Time Warner's culture, Bill Clinton's wife, Jack Kemp's politics, and Bill Bennett's virtue.

The mystery of contemporary Mexico is not the heart of darkness lying behind the charm and intrigue, but the difference between the Mexicans you meet in Mexico and the ones you encounter on the American side of the border. (I am talking not about the long-established Mexican-American community of the American Southwest but last night's arrivals, their hands bloodied from climbing wire fences and their wet shirts sticking to their backs.) Open-border enthusiasts will protest that being hunted down by helicopters, Broncos, and German Shepherds changes human beings, and they have a point. There is also the fact that Mexicans arriving in the United States today come from deeper within the country than they once did, and that many of them are not really Mejicanos at all—they are Indios. Still, a visit even to a demographically swamped border city like Ciudad Juárez, with its proliferating colonias along the river against the ragged desert mountains, suggests that America is receiving in substantial numbers not necessarily the poorest of the Mexican population, but very likely the worst.

Pathetically the Mexican authorities, like those of every Third World country, discourage foreigners from experiencing what is most simple and touching about Mexico. The travel agencies will tell you that there is a single train daily between Nogales, at the Arizona border, and Hermosillo, the capital of Sonora, and no bus service at all. I learned of the existence of a second train from a Mexican-American gentleman in the lobby of the Americana Hotel in Nogales, Arizona. It was, he explained, a second-class train, departing at 7:45 in the morning and arriving at 2:00 in the afternoon after a run of 174 miles. "I'm in the produce business," an American businessman told me that evening at a restaurant on the Mexican side where we were eating supper. "I deal with these people all the time. Whatever you do, don't take the bus down there. They're a wipeout. And you don't want to take the second-class train, with the pigs and the sheep and the goats." "It isn't dangerous, is it?" He shrugged. "You'll be uncomfortable." "And why," his wife wanted to know, "when the other is only fifty-six dollars?"

"¿Hay una plaza de toros en Nogales?" I asked the taxi driver as we rode the five kilometers from the international cross-

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ing to the train station. The driver was nutbrown, as wide as he was tall. His steel gray hair had been slicked straight back from the temples, and his face was covered by wens. "Sí, señor. Y en Hermosillo también."

In the early morning light filtered by the dust and smoke of the city the drab public architecture of the estación loomed like a gray cutbank against the gravel hills. The train was an ancient diesel locomotive and two grimy coaches, the car ends crowded with people who had been unable to secure a seat inside or else wished to enjoy fresh air on the trip. I entered the second car and sat on the armrest of an aisle seat where someone was already sitting. The conductor had brought along his wife and four small girls for the ride, establishing them in facing seats behind the first row, which was occupied by two greenpainted trunks containing thermoses from which he dispensed oversweet black coffee. I asked him if he accepted American money. The conductor nodded and palmed the two quarters I gave him, while everyone looked on politely.

The train departed without notice, three-quarters of an hour ahead of schedule, the cars jolting hard against one another and the airbrakes hissing viciously. As it rocked slowly through the environs of Nogales people continued to stare with tactful delicacy. I moved from the armrest to sit on one of the green trunks, and the conductor did not object. The overhead racks were jammed with pails of lard and cardboard boxes packed with ham sandwiches, and the aisle was full of people sitting on their luggage. A woman with a broad Indian face, rather stylishly dressed, continued to smile at me as she cradled a kitten in her arms.

Brown wrinkled mountains ran on either side of the green valley. In the towns along the line people stood in formal arrangement before their houses to watch the train pass. There were churches and Tecate signs, arroyos filled with trash and car bodies, and then the countryside would open out again. At each stop women climbed up and made their way with difficulty through the coaches, selling tamales, pastries, and Cocas; arriving at the next station they were met by their husbands in pickup trucks. At Magdalena, the object of a pilgrimage every September to honor the bones of the Spanish Jesuit Father Kino, a young man came aboard with two plastic buckets on his arm. Seeing me he stopped to exhibit his wares; these were dried apple pastries, each neatly wrapped in its plastic sack. I shook my head. "You don't want to buy—as usual," the young man said. He said it pleasantly with a smile. "I've already had breakfast. It's too early in the morning to eat again." He continued smiling. "Buy something anyway." I bought a pastry, and he made change in American currency.

"Where are you from?" he asked. "From Wyoming, in the north." "Would you like to live here?" "The people are very nice. Do you think I could make a living?" "I don't know. Will you get off to eat lunch at Benjamin Hill?" "Will there be time for lunch?" "Yes." He watched me carefully for several seconds before adding, "It has been nice talking to you. I must go now."

By accident I caught the conductor's eldest daughter staring at me; she looked away quickly. The girls all had on immaculate white dresses trimmed in purple and red. As if on cue they tossed their Coca bottles through the open window. "¿Habla inglés?" "¡No!" She shook her head emphatically and looked over to her mother, a very fat but otherwise quite pretty woman who had not stopped eating since we left Nogales.

At Benjamin Hill a large crowd awaited the train beside the tracks. "¡Tacos!" "¡Sodas!" "¡Tamales!" "¡Ensaladas!" Vendors peddling carts or striding beside the coaches handed up Cocas and Tecates through the windows of the train. The baggage car joined on with sudden impact and a successive jolting along the cars and the train moved slowly in reverse, accompanied by the vendors, shouting. The train stopped. "Permiso," the conductor asked of me as he reached to light the gas stove on the floor of the coach behind the seat. When he had the flame up his wife heated the tacos he had bought, placing them in a frying pan on the burner. As the train pulled out the villagers waved and the vendors fell back, the train gathering speed. "Un Tecate," I told a man in the uniform of the Ferocarriles Nacionales de México who carried a basket filled with Cocas and beer. "Sí, señor." He opened a can and held it forward. "¿Cuanto cuesta?" "Cinco mil pesos." I looked at the man. A campesino who had been watching the exchange from a piece of board laid across a crate shook his head. "No," he said. "Demasiado." Too much.

The conductor, caught in the exchange, seemed bemused. The vendor, looking abashed, stood rigid. Slowly the campesino leaned forward from his crate, took the bill from my hand, and presented it to the vendor. He told the man what change to make, received it from him, and gave me the money. The vendor pocketed the difference and disappeared at once into the vestibule. The campesino looked at me sadly as if to say, "The heart of man is evil beyond description."

A youngish man, prematurely aged in the face, came along the aisle, bracing himself against the seatbacks. He held a cigarette in one hand and a beer in the other. "Hello," he said. "How are you? Where are you from? Where are you going?" He was on his way to Guadalajara, on vacation from his job as a shrimp-sheller in a restaurant in Nogales. Turning his hand over he displayed an ugly burn along the side that he had received while frying shrimps in oil three days before. "I like to cook," the young man said. "Do you like to cook? I bet you have a nice wife—a blonde. There are many blondes in California. I used to live in f------ California, but f--- that. Mexico is the place to be, no place on earth like Mexico." He gestured with the cigarette toward the vineyards spoking past the train. Dark figures stooped and straightened down the long rows of vines. "In Mexico," the man said contemptuously, "Indians work in the fields—I don't. I want money, f---, I go to f------ California." He broke off to pat at a small sharp-faced girl passing in the aisle, and take her by the arm. She flung loose from his hand and turned on him with a fierce adult composure. "¡Borracho!" she hissed.

I disembarked on the wide platform of the estación at Hermosillo where Guatemalan refugees sat on folding chairs surrounded by their bundles and packages, staring with expressionless faces across the tracks to a row of dingy blue box cars wavering in the heat. Low gravel hills showed between the cars, and pieces of a lake nearly colorless in the neutral haze that smelled of garbage and mesquite smoke, the primary odors of northern Mexico. I hailed a taxi in front of the station and threw my suitcase onto the front seat beside the driver.

"¿Hay una plaza de toros en Hermosillo?" I asked him as we drove off.

"Sí, señor," he replied. "Y en Nogales también."

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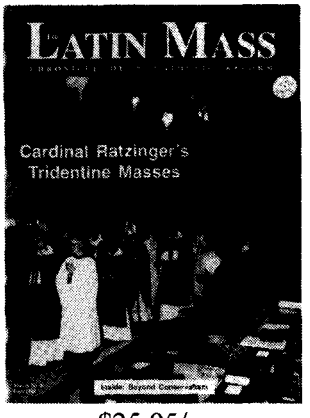

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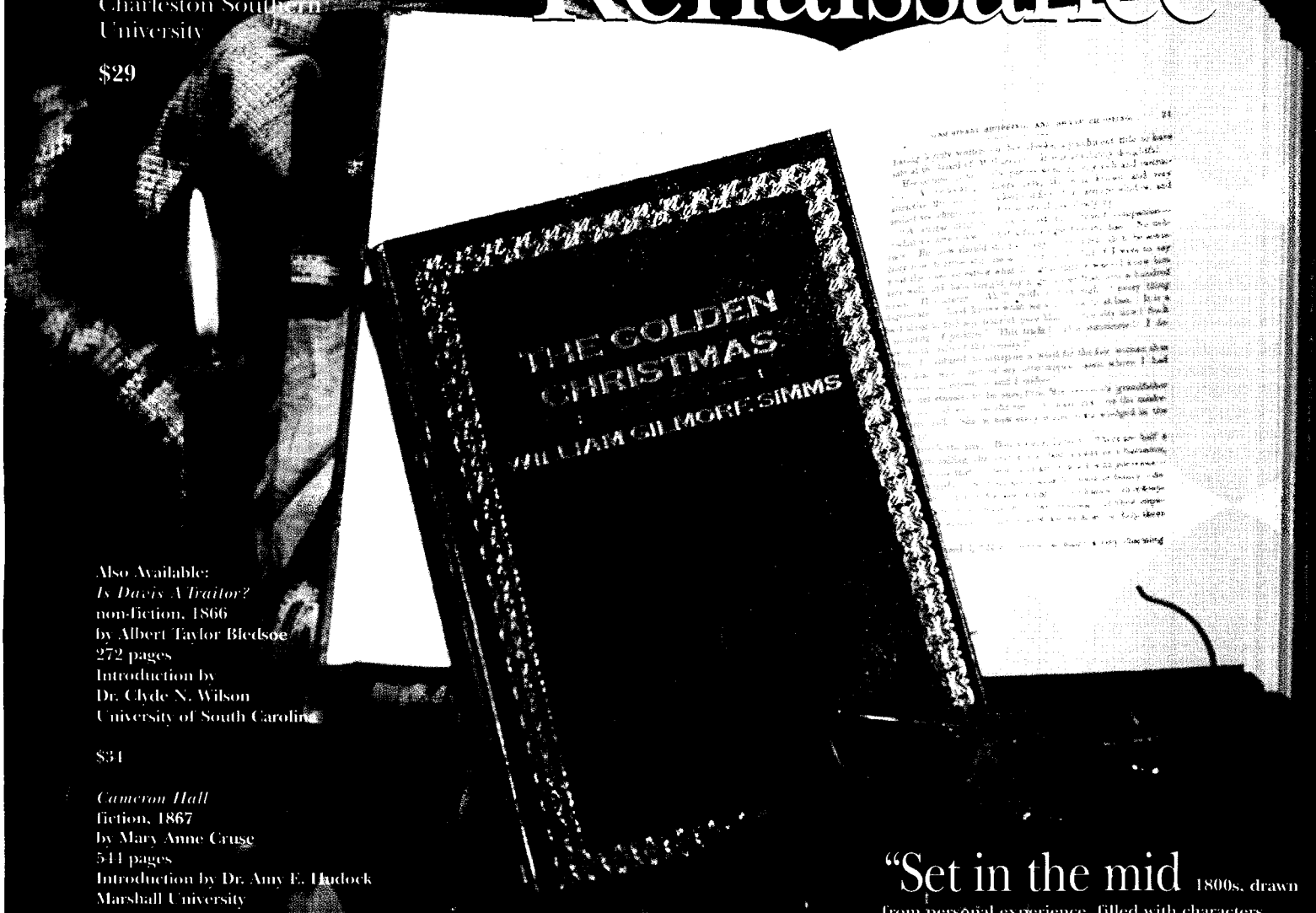

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